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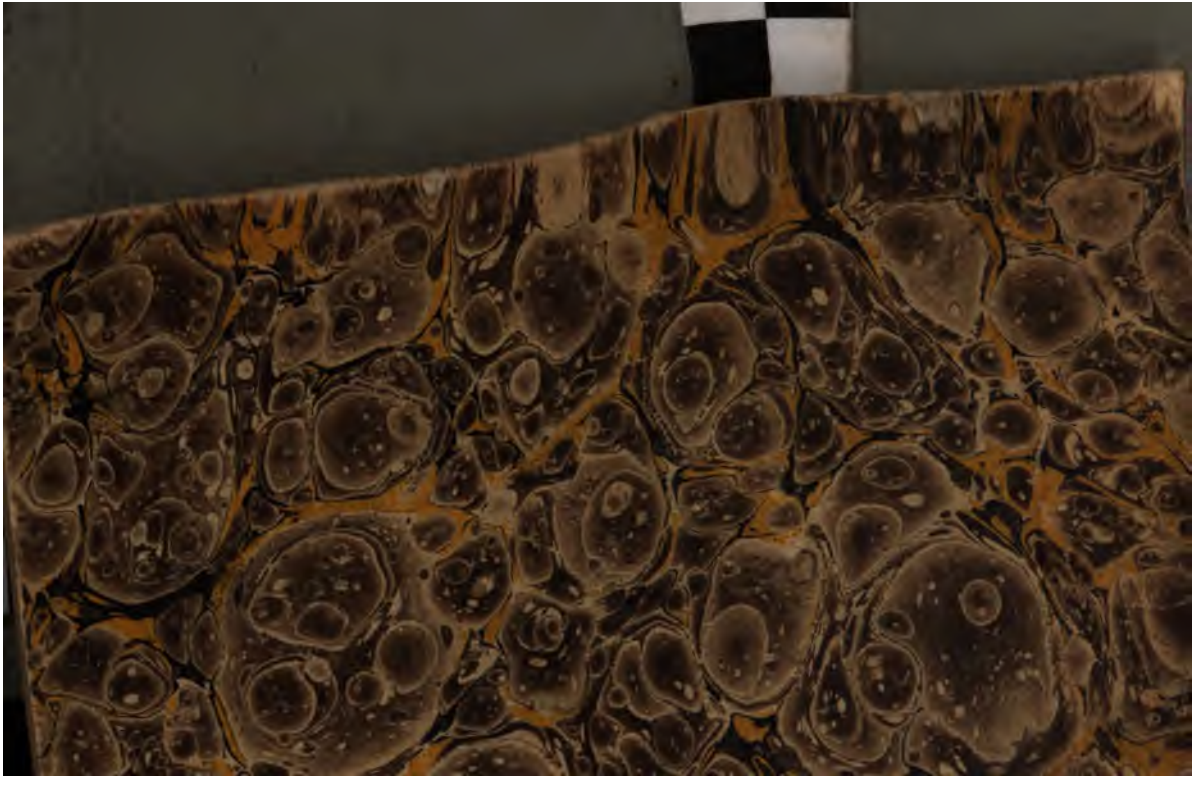

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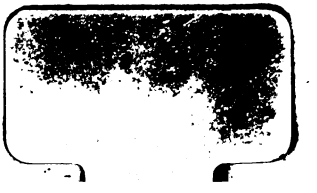

MY HAUNTS

AND

THEIR FREQUENTERS.

BY

EDMUND H. YATES.

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TO

ALBERT SMITH, Esq.

MY EARLIEST AND KINDEST LITERARY FRIEND,

This little Book

IS INSCRIBED.

Gloucester Place,
July 1854.

PREFACE.

In offering this little volume to the public, I lay claim to no particular originality of style nor power of description by which to move the purse-strings and enchain the attention of that large class of persons to whom the "shilling book" on a railway journey is as necessary as the ticket itself. I have no "darling of a hero" for the ladies' nor any "stunning party" for the gentlemen's admiration. Should, however, the truthfulness of my sketches be admitted—should they for one half-hour be enabled to relieve the tedium suffered by the traveller, or to win a smile from the middle-aged lawyer, curate, or doctor, as he glances over the description of what were once *his* "haunts," my aim will be accomplished and my purpose achieved.

MY HAUNTS.

CHAPTER I.—Introductory.

I think it is Paul de Kock who makes one of his heroes say, "*J'ai vecu beaucoup dans peu d'années.*" I am not quite certain of my author, but I think I must be right, for I recollect meeting with the sentiment, and adopting it as my motto, in days when my whole notions were filled with *Bals Mabilles, Valentinos, Chaumières, Etudiants,* and *Grisettes:* in a word, when I used to study Paul de Kock and imagine him superior to any writer of any age or country. I have not the same opinion of him now, I frankly confess; my experience and a different style of life have changed my style of reading, and my notions of excellence in literature altered simultaneously: but I still think the aphorism is applicable to myself. It must be, else why should I, at an age when most men of my own time and position are just entering upon London life, its amusements, its wildness,

its thousand channels of pleasure and regret,—why should I be sitting here at my desk, entirely *blasé* as to what is called "the world," only seeking amusement by my fireside and among my books, and endeavouring to pen my own experiences?

I close my last paragraph with a note of interrogation, and to the query my critics have a ready answer. "Why, indeed," say they, "unless you were a very foolish young man, with a Byronic tendency! Had you lived at the commencement of this century you would have turned down your shirt-collar, knitted your brows, and written poetry; the metre of which would have been Spenserian,—the theme, your aversion to your fellow-creatures."

All this I deny: my fellow-creatures have, instead of my aversion, my warmest regard. I have no Byronic tendency, nor any poetical aspirations. My simple object in quoting the French sentence was to make an apology to those to whom I may happen to be known for having ventured, at so young an age, to give my opinions and experiences of the subjects of which I purpose to treat; and this apology thus made, I will commence.

In common with most men, I believe, I have my haunts,—places where I am in the habit of being seen at stated periods, at occasional intervals; places where I am known and respected; places where I

am recognised and abused. In London, there is scarcely a young man who is called "on the town" (I mean it in no invidious sense) who has not certain places of resort, which, after a short time, become, and are known to him and his friends as, "his haunts." These, of course, vary, according to his means, his temperament, and his profession; but they are easily recognisable by any one who has studied London life with any degree of attention.

For instance, when I hear that young Brownsmith has left the paternal mansion in Norfolk, and come up to London to be articled to Nisey, Prious, and Bankow, the eminent solicitors of Bedford Row, I, being slightly acquainted with old Brownsmith, and guessing therefrom his son's means and notions, know where to lay my hand upon him at any hour of the day or night. As old Brownsmith is one of the principal clients of the firm (always getting into a mess with turnpike trusts, poor-law guardians, poachers, and other benevolent persons, who kindly give a great deal of trouble for the purpose of killing country gentlemen's time), young B. will not be required to attend too punctually in the morning. In all probability he will drop into the office about eleven o'clock, in a state of faultless attire and semi-seediness from the fatigues of the previous night, and after a bottle of soda water, fetched by the junior

clerk, a sprightly youth of sixty-three, at a salary of a pound a-week, the "Times" newspaper will command his instant and unremitting attention until one, when Horace Mattins, the other articled clerk, whose family are High Church, and whose brother is the celebrated curate of St. Boanerges, will look up from the "Chronicle" and suggest an oyster. Acquiescing with this notion, Mr. Brownsmith will put on his hat, and the pair will stroll away, arm-in-arm, down to Prosser's, close by Gray's Inn Lane, at whose counter, redolent of crab and lobster, they may be found until two. On his return to Bedford Row, Mr. Brownsmith will copy a couple of letters and read through an injunction for the benefit of the head of the firm (to whom he is always applying sacrilegious epithets, and whom he styles "A 1"); and this labour will last him until four, when, after a severe hand-washing and hair-brushing, he betakes him to the Park, and there, in company with congenial spirits, promenades, stares into the broughams, and gazes at the footmen of the more aristocratic equipages, until seven. From that hour until "daylight doth appear," he devotes himself to what he calls "pleasure." A dinner, with much half-and-half and strong port-wine at Simpson's, a visit to the Argyll Rooms, a ditto to the Blue Posts, (facetiously termed by him the "Cœrulean Pillars"), a glass of soda and

brandy at Tom Toft's, a "shy for a little silver" at Lazarus's in Jermyn Street, or a "drop into the Pic," will constitute items in his evening's amusement.

Ex uno disce omnes. Jack Trephine of the Middlesex, or Bob Docket of the Stamps and Taxes, will be differently engaged during the day, but their nights, the proper season for haunts, will be spent in much the same manner. Of them, however, I do not intend to treat, but to endeavour to give some notion of what were once my own favourite places of resort, and to try and instil into my readers the same love which I feel for them.

CHAPTER II.

OF MY EARLIEST HAUNTS.

My notions of my very earliest haunts are naturally somewhat hazy and indistinct. A species of mist appears to hang over them, in the midst of which certain recollections stand out as large buildings, vehicles, and lamp-posts, are seen looming in a London fog. A small shop, established for the sale of what was called by its frequenters "tuck," was, I think, my very earliest scene of dissipation. It was kept by a wizen-faced, blear-eyed old woman, hight "Mother Jennings," who made the principal portion of the delicacies with her own very dirty fingers. These condiments comprised hardbake, toffee, sugar-candy, bulls' eyes (which were kept in little glass jars with fractured lids), peppermint, with which we used pleasantly to scent the entire schoolroom, and a preparation of red and white filth, streaked like a barber's pole, popularly supposed to be part of the anatomy of the late prisoner of St. Helena, and called in consequence, "Boney's ribs."

In this resort was expended the hebdomadal sum allowed to me as pocket-money, amounting to some three pence, and when capital had failed, in this resort was I first initiated into that bane of future life, the "credit system." Oh, Mother Jennings! wicked Mother Jennings! well do you deserve to be thus apostrophized: to you I have owed many a stomach-ache and many a heart-ache too, for you allowed me to run in debt to the extent of two shillings, and my days were rendered dull and my nights sleepless, with visions of huge birch brooms and tingling extremities, as I thought of my inability to pay!

What other haunts had I in my boyhood? A large haystack, always built at the end of the field in which we used to play cricket, and behind which, brown rolls of a vegetable substance, yielding smoke, costing one penny, and named after the immortal Pickwick, were solemnly inhaled. An old oak, scathed and blasted by lightning, but with four comfortable seats among its withered branches, in which the process of surreptitious fumigation was also carried on. A low-roofed dingy room, with large blackened oaken beams crossing the ceiling, and a sanded floor plentifully adorned with spittoons, furnished with plain wooden tables, elegantly marked with the rings made by the bottoms of wet pewter pots, and the hardest Windsor chairs, diabolically

besprinkled with knobs and bumps on those parts into which that tender portion of anatomy, popularly known as "the small of the back," would most likely be fitted;—this was the parlour of the "Sun and Punchbowl," the most retired inn of the village in which I was educated; to get into which parlour more stratagem, intrigue, bribery and cunning, were put into action, than ever were required to win a battle or gain the seat for an incorruptible borough. All these arts were brought into play for the purpose of drinking that deliciously exhilarating mixture, "rum shrub."

It has been my fortune during my life to taste some remarkably good liquor. I have drank Johannisberg on Prince Metternich's own estate; I have dined at tables at which rare old Port has been produced, over which established connoisseurs, with grey heads and red faces, have smacked their lips unctuously and twinkled their little eyes with delight; nay, at a Greenwich dinner I once tasted Tokay, which, up to the period of drinking, I had looked upon as a fabulous beverage (only known to Messrs. G. P. R. James, Harrison Ainsworth, and other "what ho!" "by'r lady!" style of authors, who are wont to make their heroes perpetually call for "flagons" of it), but I have never yet found anything to come up to that rum shrub! So strong is my re-

collection of its delicious flavour, that the other day I stepped into a tavern during a shower, and being desirous of doing something "for the good of the house," I ordered a glass.

I am bound to confess it was a failure; whether the shrub had withered, or my palate become vitiated, (most probably the latter, I'm afraid: I don't think I could eat toffee now, and Boney's ribs would certainly make my teeth ache), I cannot tell, but I was compelled to leave the glass almost untasted.

These recollections of my boyhood's haunts are necessarily somewhat dimmed by time; they have not the sharp edge nor the strong colouring that my later experiences of London life still retain: nevertheless, I have written them as they occurred to my mind, and, in so doing, have awaked so many thoughts and feelings long at rest, have recalled so many bye-gone scenes, both of pleasure and regret, that my pen has frequently been laid aside while I have indulged in my reveries. Dare I but hope that the perusal of what I have already written may give a tithe of the pleasure that I have felt in writing it, and my aim will be more than accomplished!

Proceeding onward with the course of my life, I come to my next haunt, which was widely different to any I have ever had, before or since. Let me describe it:—In an old German town on the banks of

the Rhine, where the high houses, duly arched and gabled, frown over the ill-paved street, stands or stood a low-roofed, dirty, smoke-dried looking tavern, bearing the sign of the "Wild Man," but known to all the gay spirits of the town as "The Kneipe." Any small tavern or pothouse is, by the way, called a "Kneipe," but this is "*The* Kneipe," *par excellence*. Every evening this place is the resort of all the students of the University, of all the painters of the Academy, and of those young men engaged in the counting-houses of the town, who are introduced as friends of one or other of the afore-named classes. Reader, are your digestive powers good, your nerves strong, your own notions of what is good not likely to lead you to break out at what you consider wrong? If so, come in and look upon the scene, at least as much of it as you can distinguish through the mist of tobacco smoke up-curling from every mouth. The room you will perceive is long, low, and dingy, with tables running down the centre and sides, wooden settles and other furniture of the commonest description; undecorated, save by chalk caricatures of the members, done by themselves and by each other, and admirably portraying the peculiarities of each. Listen to the awful noise! the shouting, screeching, yelling, blaspheming uproar, that begins with sunset and ends not until drunkenness has silenced the alter-

cation! This is Young Germany, my friend; and, much as we may deplore the effect of our Casinos and other places of London night resort, they are undoubtedly preferable to receptacles like these, where Atheism, Socialism, and Communism are openly inculcated by the cleverest, and listened to with eagerness, even by the dullest of the assemblage, where talent is used as the disseminator of vice, and where great and glorious names and books are introduced but to be made a jeer and a laughing-stock. These pale-browed spectacled youths have no faith but in themselves, no hope but in their own aggrandisement, no charity for any other creed than that they hold, which is Materialism. Their fun consists in the lowest ribaldry or the loudest riot. See, it is just about to commence! Look at this procession of youths now entering the door, with long strips of lighted paper twisted in their fair and curling hair; listen to the yells with which they are received! the roaring chorus which the president of the club strikes up as they enter the room, and which is echoed by every person present! Look at this boy, he cannot be above sixteen, challenging his opposite neighbour to mortal combat with huge beer glasses! hark to the ring of the goblets as the combatants clash them together before drinking! mark the countenance of both as they inhale their breath in order

that they may pour the liquor into their stomachs as they would into an empty tub! mark the starting eyes, the swelling veins of the younger one, as he finishes his third goblet! see the victorious air of his opponent as the poor boy falls from his seat, insensate, stupified, drunk! This, my friend, is a nightly recurring episode in a German student's life. Before the end of the evening, one of these madmen will very likely take it in his head to dance on the table and kick those sitting round it in the face; every one objecting to this unceremonious treatment will be challenged, and to morrow the beautiful meadows surrounding the village of Pappelsdorf will be the scene of several encounters. At the "first blood" they cease, but the "first blood" may happen to be from nose or ear. After this you will not be surprised at the slashes and scars ornamenting the faces of the German students, when you see them on your next trip up the Rhine. In a "Kneipe" such as I have described, I was once witness to a scene which first impressed me with the horrors of practical joking: let me relate it, and then turn to my more recent haunts.

We had been all sitting one evening, according to our usual custom, singing, shouting, abusing our betters and each other, when the president of the night noticed that one of the company had fallen into a

drunken sleep, his head reclining on his arms, which were crossed upon the table. He immediately proposed this as a fitting opportunity to try the strength of mind on which Eckhardt (the sleeper) so much prided himself. He told us to go on with our different occupations; some were to talk, some play dominoes, some billiards, others were to be drinking together: he would extinguish the lamps, but we were all to continue our amusements as though the room were still lighted, and if called upon, were to declare that such was the case. He then turned out the lamps, and by a sharp kick awakened the drunken man.

The clamour, the smoke, the shouting in which this wretched being had closed his eyes, all greeted him on his revival; one thing alone, the light, was absent, and he commenced an attack upon us for having left him in the dark. "What the deuce are you at," said he, "to be sitting here in the darkness of Hades?"

"Ah, bah!" said the president; "sleep off thy drunken fit, Franz, and leave us alone! Come, Kraus, there's a cannon!" and a sharp stroke on the billiard balls rang through the room.

"Bravo!" shouted another of the conspirators. "Point, quinte et quatorze—the game's mine;" and the cards, thrown exultingly into the air, fell with a crash upon the table.

"Stop!" cried the wretched Eckhardt; "one moment, stop: why have you thus darkened the room?"

"Thou art drunk," roared another; "'tis thou art dark, and not the room. The room is as light as day. Thou hast not the double-six, Schimmel Hase? then I am out;" and he rattled his dominoes as he spoke.

"What!" shrieked the victim of this practical joke. "Say you the room is lighted? and you are all playing while I cannot see you? Oh, Almighty God, *I am struck blind!*"

Thus saying, he fell heavily across the table. We raised him, carried him to bed, and sent for the nearest surgeon. For three weeks he did not leave his room. He then went to Switzerland for change of air; his friends never allowed him to return to college, and I saw him no more.

Such, my friend, is an episode of life at one of my former haunts,—a German university.

CHAPTER III.

MY OFFICE.

Of all my haunts my office is the one most important to me, and therefore, of course, entitled to the first description. It is not a lawyer's office, nor a merchant's office, nor a broker's office, nor an insurance office, but a Government office,—a good, sound, wholesome, work-delaying, evasive-answer-giving, ten-to-four-staying Government office. And now, perhaps, you think that I am about to give a thorough account of the *penetralia* of the place, an entire *exposé* of the system on which its business is conducted! Tomkins nudges Jackson when he comes to the foregoing passage, and says, "Now, sir, we have it at last,—an account of the secrets of one of those infernal public departments, and of the goings-on of those rascally lazy clerks, for whose support we pay taxes, Jackson; by one of themselves, sir!" Steady, Tomkins; not so fast, my friend: I want you to pay a few more taxes for my support, and if mysteries were revealed, a dread penalty would await

the betrayer: so that of the inward working of my office you shall know nothing. I will tell you its name though, and its situation. No! I won't mention that, for fear I should lose my own; but it is called the Draft and Docket Office, and lies down in the very heart of the City. None of your flaunting west-end establishments, such as the Treasury, Home, or Privy Council, covered with stucco, and guarded by sentries, but a quiet, unpretending little building, perfectly thrown into the shade by the splendour of its immediate neighbour, a hall of one of the large city companies. In the vicinity are numerous enormous warehouses, in the little offices of which incalculable wealth is made by men large as to their hands, feet, and trousers patterns, and wonderful as to the collars of their shirts; and at the doors of these warehouses may generally be seen standing heavy vans and waggons, being laden with vast bales by men of gigantic stature and a tendency to working in their shirt-sleeves, who in the summer are being perpetually supplied with porter from the neighbouring public-houses, and who madden the clerks in my office, hot and tired by their daily grind, by the intense enjoyment they display over the refreshing beverage. The rooms of my office are fitted up in that chaste and classic style befitting the place in which so much labour for the nation is

carried on. The carpets have no distinctive pattern, no noble cauliflowers or blushing peonies, but are of one uniform sober colour; the tables are covered with green baize, refreshing to the official eye wearied with attempts at deciphering the signature of some applicant to whom Smart and Carstairs are unknown; and the seats are made of leather or cane, thus elevating us far above mere lawyers' clerks, who are compelled to sit on three-legged stools, and those, too, covered with horse-hair. By the regulations of my office we are compelled to be there at ten A.M., and to sign in a book our names and hour of arrival. I cannot say that the clerks are so punctual in their attendance as might be wished; but on looking at the afore-named book I find that, from the unparalleled difficulties daily gone through by the late ones, it is, indeed, a matter of wonder how they manage to get there at all. For instance, I find an entry, "Jas. Taper (omnibus broke down), 10·20." Again, "Rupert Ball (sprained ankle), 10·25;" and "T. Shurk, 10·46 (Fleet Street up again)." The clerks in my office seem marked out by fate as victims of innumerable casualties. Thus I find poor Ball with a sprained ankle. Ball, whom I left at three o'clock the same morning at Lady Popham Weasel's, dancing like a male Giselle; and

as for Shurk, he certainly must be much spited by the Commissioners of Paving, for Fleet Street was in as complete a state of repair as it ever is (and that's not saying much) when I passed through it at ten minutes to ten.

It has often been said that a school is a miniature world, and I am sure my office is a miniature world also. Among the clerks there seems scarcely a phase of human nature unrepresented. There is Hareless, one of our seniors; that man, sir, as he will tell you, "has been two-and-forty years in this infernal hole," he has "begged leave to acquaint," and been "directed to inform" more people than would fill Drury Lane Theatre, and has been the "obedient, humble servant" of thousands. He came to the office when there were but thirteen men in it, and now there are thirty: "but they're not like the good old lot, sir; the present men are a set of book-reading young thieves, whose sole pleasure consists in attending lectures or going to humbugging dancing-parties, whereas in the old time we drank port wine all day, and played whist or écarté all night. Many a time I've made one of a whist party after four o'clock on a Saturday, and we've had in plenty of grub, and never unlocked the door until ten on Monday morning, sir;" and then young Jack

Rasper, who has just joined us, will shake his head reprovingly at Hareless, and call him "a dissipated and profane old party."

Jack Rasper may be taken as a specimen of our fast clerk. He is always in a faultless state of get-up. His collars are the stiffest and his hands the whitest in the office. He writes a worse hand, too, and is more loose in his orthography, than the majority. No sooner has the clock struck four than Jack sallies forth, jumps into a Hansom, and rushes westward. If it be the season, he is to be seen in the course of half an hour on one of the leggiest mares in the Park; and as he canters by the side of Mrs. Highflyer's brougham, and holds sparkling conversation with its fair inmate, or listens to the band in Kensington Gardens, you might mistake him for a swell Guardsman. He knows everybody, does Jack. Goes out to all the *déjeúners* and *thés*, and *soirées dansantes* of London. His looking-glass is so obscured with cards of invitation, that he can scarcely see his wizen little face in it. He is intimate with comic authors, too, and has been into Paul Bedford's dressing-room. His acquaintance with the *ballet* is unbounded; *coryphées*, *corps de ballet* and *extras*, he knows them all, and calls them by their Christian names; and he generally makes one of old Sir Jasper Fakeaway's Sunday ballet-

parties, which are given at the Trafalgar at Greenwich, once or twice during the season, and at which Jack mimics the unsuspecting and revered baronet in the most barefaced manner, to the delight of the assembled guests. He generally takes his vacation in January, and goes to Paris, whence he returns full of *bals masqués*, *cabinets particuliers*, and a certain Eugénie or Augustine: he will sober down some day, marry, have a large family, and become what is called a respectable member of society, which at present shrinks when his name is mentioned, and expresses its conviction that he is lost.

Fast also, but of a different kind of fastness, is Tom Doland. He is of a sporting turn, brings surreptitious terriers to the office in the pockets of his great-coat, takes a daily stroll to the various betting-offices in the neighbourhood, carries a little memorandum-book, which he calls his "metallic," lays liberal odds against anything, and is reported to make a very good thing out of his would-be knowing fellow-clerks. He is a species of peripatetic "Bell's Life," and perfectly competent to give any information usually sought for in that erudite journal. The date of any race, rowing-match, fight, pedestrian feat, or rat-hunt of notoriety, he can give at once; and it is whispered he has been initiated into the

secrets of the mystic game of "nurr and spell." At sporting public-houses he is entirely in his element: the landlord, a retired fighting-man, is friendly with him; the waiter, a species of amateur prize-fighter, respects him; and when there is a grand dinner, the "Fulham Fibber in the chair, faced by Nobby Clarke," you may depend upon it Tom Doland is to be found at the right hand of one of these gentlemen, revered and looked up to by the assemblage.

Other clerks have we, curious characters. There is Jack Laffin, who ran away from school and served for four years in the Mexican army, who has been a slave agent, a sailor, a Montreal merchant, a dramatic writer, a newspaper editor, and who is now, with a bald head and a large family, comfortably beginning life again at forty years of age, as a junior clerk in the Draft and Docket, with a salary of 90*l.* a-year, working hard for promotion. There is old Feathers, whose life is passed in reading the newspaper and attending to his Cochin China fowls; and old Cockle, who devotes his existence to the consumption of antibilious medicine. Last, and least (at all events, in stature, though certainly not in his own importance), is little Crossbones, the most melancholy of blighted mortals, who can be backed to break the spirit even of the lightest-hearted Irishman,

and render him wretched in a month. No disease can be mentioned to which, by his own account, he has not been a martyr, and at this moment he is suffering, I believe, under a combined attack of atrophy and leprosy. However, illness is never suffered to disturb the action of his brain: he is intensely scientific, and has discovered the circulation of the blood, the electric telegraph, and the art of taking sun-pictures. I say "discovered," because, in a loud and lucid discourse of two hours' length, he satisfactorily proved to me that the reputed inventors, Messrs. Harvey, Wheatstone, and Daguérre, were mere *charlatans*, and that all the merit lies with him alone. But among this motley assemblage are men, true gentlemen in every sense of the word, from whom I have received assistance and kindness in time of need, and to whom I am sincerely attached; indeed, however much I am occasionally induced to grumble, I question whether there is any station in life in which I should be better treated or less worried than in my office.

CHAPTER IV.

MY CLUB.

When I walk through the gilded saloons and recline upon the cut velvet ottomans of my club, I am often tempted to compare them with the dingy rooms and ancient furniture which call me master in Gray's Inn Square. I look with reverence upon Mr. Redseele, the butler, who condescends to bring me my pint of St. Estephe; and a blush of shame tinges my cheek as I think of Mrs. Riley (who acts as my laundress and sole domestic *chez moi*), and dare to institute a comparison between her and this pampered menial. I feel a species of moral guilt in inhabiting a place so much above my circumstances; but, upon reflection, I find I am by no means the only person in such a state, and to know my delinquency shared by many of my fellow-clubbists acts as flattering unction to my soul. For instance, when I see Dr. Grubber sitting down to a delicious little dinner prepared for him by M. Anatole, our *chef;* when I hear him order a bottle of "Thompson

and Croft's '36, with the yellow seal: mind, waiter!" I, knowing the doctor's circumstances, and being able to make a tolerably shrewd guess at his income, am at once enabled to perceive the strong course of pinching and misery which will have to be undergone by Mrs. Grubber and her amiable daughters, at present resident in a back street at Chelsea. When Young Flukes loses heavily at billiards (which he generally does, for he will always play pool with Captain Hazard and Dick Cannon, the best hands in the club), who suffers for it? Not Flukes himself, but his mother, widow of Lieut. Flukes, H.E.I.C.S., who was killed by the natives at Chunderumbad, and whose widow supports herself and two children on the pension allowed by "John Company." So that, consoling myself by these reflections, I make a good deal of use of my club, and pass much time there. I am permitted to introduce a stranger. Will you, reader, favour me with your company, and I will point out to you the principal lions of the place? This is the entrance hall—Bust of Shakspeare on the right; ditto of Sir George Sylex, the eminent geologist (for we are intensely literary and scientific at my club), on the left. Pictures and busts of various distinguished members on either side. On the left, the coffee-room. That man with two newspapers before him is old Flinskint; he is working

out his subscription in his daily luncheon of bread and beer, for which he pays nothing. At the table next him, making extracts from a volume of the "Annual Register" in a shaky scrawl, and fortifying himself by hot brandy and water (it is just 2 P.M.), sits old Macpherson, one of the ancient class of pressmen, thank Heaven! nearly extinct. Dirty, fawning, and venal, he will take any side or opinion for hire; and though you or I had given him the five-pound note he has just sent to be changed, were our bitterest enemy to come in and offer him a larger sum, we should at once become the objects of his slander. Confidentially chatting to that little circle in the centre of the room is Mr. Flote, the stage-manager of the Parthenium. He is always full of chat and scandal; in fact, half an hour's conversation with him is as good as a column of that defunct and lamented paper, the "Scarifier." He is now giving his listeners the latest green-room gossip, with the full particulars of the separation between Young Purser and Madame Diantre, and a detailed account of the last row between Mr. Spleen and the members of his *corps*. Come up-stairs—The drawing-rooms—handsome, are they not, in their green and gold hangings, and chair and sofa coverings? More members. Young Lithpson, who has been for two years in the Guards, is standing before the fire, with his coat-tails under his arm, explaining how the

Russian war *ought* to be conducted,—a task for which his military experience fully qualifies him. The tall man, who is perpetually interrupting him with "Nonsense!" and "Abs*arrd!*" is Mr. Sinnick, popularly believed to be one of the kindest-hearted men in London, but universally admitted to be the most disagreeable, who hides his good qualities under a mask of intolerable bearishness. There, too, is little Mr. Kooleese, who, after greeting me, wishes to make your acquaintance,—is delighted to see you. Yes! "Your hand! you do him proud!" Passing from the drawing room into the writing-room, we find Mr. Bulbul, the eminent writer on Oriental subjects, busily engaged in inditing his second volume of "The Fez and the Fakeer," and using the club letter-paper for the purpose. There, too, is Charley Rosewater, of the 180th Hussars, who is answering two or three little cocked-hat notes, with a simper on his handsome face; and poor Ritt, without any simper, poring over a lengthy document, written in a legal hand on remarkably blue paper. The smoking-room is empty now, but at night it rings with merriment. There, Mr. Justice Jeffries, so fierce and magnificent on the bench, relaxes into the best retailer of Irish stories and the best concocter of whisky-punch in the kingdom. There, if you permit him, old Magg will give you a full account of his Egyptian trip, and choke himself

in attempting to smoke a *narghilé*. There Kooleese will occasionally constitute himself chairman of the assemblage, and bring out Young Footlight's imitations and Old Towler's songs; and there even Mr. Tocsin, Q.C., is put down into silence, and ceases to bawl his circuit stories and *nisi-prius* jokes across the room to his brother barristers.—Is anybody ever black-balled? Yes, we black-balled Young Spoonbill, only son of Sir Thomas Spoonbill, friend of his late revered majesty George the Fourth, and one of the ornaments of "Browne's" club-house in St. James's Street, the bow-window of which is universally styled by Young Lithpson "the monkey-cage!" Mr. Pander, the "*impresario*" (as he is called in the newspapers) of one of our largest theatres, met a similar fate; and sporting-men and stock-brokers are generally deemed ineligible. This, however, is merely a wholesome manner of keeping ourselves tolerably select; the "odds against Backbiter" and the news that "things were pretty firm just before closing—five and three-eighths," being matters which, however delightful to peculiar sets, are not interesting to the community at large. If you want true sociability, real comfort, and pleasant acquaintances, you had better let me propose you at my club.

CHAPTER V.

MY THEATRE.

If there be one haunt in which I enjoy myself more than another, it is at my theatre, the most amusing, laughter-creating, tear-compelling place in London, from which I emerge for a glass of ale after the melodrama with an aching heart, and which I finally quit after the farce with aching sides. Everybody knows my theatre, and everybody goes there: larger houses close, and only open again as operas, harmonic halls, or bazaars; houses of a higher rank, and which pride themselves on being much more aristocratic, are compelled to shut up for a certain season of the year, when their patrons are out of town: but, summer or winter, season or no season, my theatre is always open, always full, always doing well. The hottest dog-day does not wither the "screaming farce," the coldest December night does not freeze the fount of sympathy in the bosoms of the audience: like the Bank, Christmas Day and Good Friday are the only holydays it ac-

knowledges; even these are grudgingly bestowed, and I doubt not that, on the above-named nights, the manager of my theatre would open it and play sacred "mysteries," if the Lord Chamberlain would only license the performance.

The outside of my theatre is very striking,—not from its architectural beauty,—not from its massive portico, supported by noble pillars (for, to tell the truth, it boasts neither one nor the other); but from the size, colour, and boldness of the bills, with which it is adorned. To know the man who writes those bills has long been the summit of my ambition! What a command of capital letters he has!—what power of adjective!—what knowledge of the importance of notes of admiration!

Could any tender-hearted damsel decline to be taken to see "Love and Arsenic, or the Shipwreck and the Drooping Flower of the Pockethankys?" Could any laughter-loving bachelor refuse the price of his admission to the pit, when asked in large type, "Did you ever send your Grandfather to Peckham?" or told to go and see "Mashed Potatoes at Putney?" Such skill has the manager of my theatre in what the newspapers call "catering" for the amusement of his audience!

Occasionally, however, there may be a little lull in the excitement; the "drooping flower" may have

run to seed, and the "grandfather" be tired of Peckham; then's your time for an order. If you know the "thunder," or have any relations with the "first mob" from him, you obtain a small printed slip of paper, with which you present yourself at the doors some minutes before seven o'clock. Don't be later, or you may miss your chance of *entrée;* but, buttoning your coat, thrusting your hat far on your head, and closely followed by the *fidus Achates* who is to share your treat, fling yourself into the mob of forty people holding similar privileges, and extend your pass. The goal is won! You have triumphed! The dirty little man in the box scans your paper with an unmoved countenance (he has had no excitement in theatricals since he took checks during the time of the O. P. Row), and you are permitted to enter the house. Of course, you make for the front seats; but a polite, though decided box-keeper, stays your progress. These are reserved for the paying portion of the audience. Your's was what is politely termed a "complimentary admission," and you must sit behind. No matter, "anywhere, so long as you can see," you say; and, goodhumouredly, seat yourself in the back-boxes. What curious people are assembled there! What wonderful toilets are sported by the gentlemen, and what odd head-dresses by the

ladies! What hard seats they are, too! and how cleverly the architect has planted the pillars supporting the gallery, which, though thin and rounded, manage to intercept the view of at least half-a-dozen people! The overture is just beginning, and you have time to look round the house before the curtain rises. Your next neighbour knows everybody, and will point you out the lions. The tall man in the stage-box, he with the moustache and hooked nose, is Sir Alfred Highflyer of the Heavies. He has "relations" with Miss Legge (you will see her afterwards in the burlesque); and, whenever her name is in the bill, the management can reckon on two guineas from Sir Alfred. The stage-box on the opposite side is filled, and entirely filled, too, by a country manager and his wife, Mr. M'Roarer of the —— Circuit, who has heard that Mugger, the third low comedian of my theatre, "has some stuff in him," and is on the eve of offering him an engagement. Other celebrities are shown you: Tom Durfy, of the "Weekly Flail;" Pliny Clearings, the eminent tragedian from the Broadway Theatre, New York, who looks down with ineffable contempt on our English attempts at acting; and Mr. Greenhawn, author of the melodrama about to be played (his first production), who comes every night, and is more tickled by his own jokes, and moved by his own sentiment,

than any one else in the house. Hush! the overture is over; the curtain rises! Scene the first—Merrymaking in a nobleman's mansion in Normandy; peasants laughing and dancing; dress of said peasants curious, applicable to any period (look in the bill—Oh! eighteenth century; all right!) —Enter Normandy nobleman, who says (in a strong Somersetshire accent) that his mind is disturbed; he is afraid his plots against the government are known; is soothed by his wife, who assures him that "Heaven has a happy day in store for them;" he replies, "It must be then beneath other skee-yies, for Fraunce is nullonger home for *him*." Enter spy, ruffian, villain, everything bad, pretended friend of Normandy nobleman; tells him, "Soldiers are on his ter-rack; but all is prepared; a ship is lying off the mouth of the river ready to sail for America, and will receive him on board." Nobleman and wife clasp each other in terrific embraces; ruffian takes the opportunity of informing the audience "that he has himself sent the soldiers; that he hates nobleman, and longs for ruv-venge." Ruffian hurries nobleman to window; as he descends, gives signal; soldiers rush in, but nobleman's wife throws herself before their guns—*tableau*, "Spare him!" Act drop descends amid shouts of "Any por-tarre, por-tarre!" Act II. Log-cabin, prairie in the distance—

America, I presume (refer to bill again: Yes, America!)—burst of applause from the audience as the heroine of my theatre bounds upon the stage. Young Indian girl (she talks like a female denizen of Leicester Square), wild, huntress, has "just shot a berrace of bairds," which she throws on the floor. "Ware is my ossband? Hiss chick 'as bin pale letly, hiss thought wandare! Should he play me fawl-se! Oh, no, no!—Enter husband, who turns out to be Normandy nobleman of first act. Indian girl exits, to give him the opportunity of a soliloquy. He takes advantage of the chance, and bemoans his present life; wonders what has become of Clarisse, his own Clarisse; is beginning to get very maudlin on this subject, when he is aroused by cries,—starts up, seizes rifle,—enter, in an extreme state of trepidation, the two comic men of my theatre, pursued by Indians; they tell a long story, during which the audience are in convulsions. You will perceive that one of them winks at the pit, while the other repeats his words many times, and this is considered the height of humour; finally, they go away. Slow music; enter, with faint and staggering steps, a woman. Heavens, 'tis Clarisse! Clarisse wandered from Normandy to the Mississippi —walked all the way, too, most likely—to find her husband. Awkward for him, while he embraces her

enter Indian lady—sees them—is furious—runs off. In the next scene shoots Normandy nobleman; pitches herself into the river, but is rescued by a raft going down to a French ship.—N.B. Beautiful sunset! what they call an "effect." The Sanspareil, my theatre, is celebrated for its effects. Act III. Normandy again; everybody home again (except nobleman); Indian lady turns out to be a Frenchwoman; (curiously enough, whatever she may be in the first two acts, she always becomes a Frenchwoman in the third;) restitution of all sorts of property to widow and child of nobleman, and general happiness of everybody.

Such is a melodrame at my theatre, very roughly sketched; and such are the scenes witnessed nightly by crowded audiences. That there is no "purpose," and no dreary blank verse in the play, I admit. You must go to the intellectual regions of Islington or Marylebone for that; but that there is amusement, and amusement of the right sort, can be fully attested by the banking account of the manager of my theatre.

CHAPTER VI.

MY TAVERN.

WHEN I am detained by business in the City, I sometimes dine at a tavern in the neighbourhood of my office, one of the most extraordinary, out-of-the-way, never-to-be-found-but-by-accident sort of places in the world. Out of the main thoroughfare, bustling with life and traffic, you turn up a quiet paved court, where no sound but your own footfall breaks the monotonous silence; a court, which is supposed to be so mysterious and unfathomable, that the ticket-porter at the corner is looked upon by the boys as a species of Alpine guide, without whose aid no stranger can arrive at his destination in safety. Be not deterred, however, by the solemn look of the place, but venture boldly in disregarding the Socialist book-shop on your right (how on earth can such a shop ever have been established here!) push that swing-door, on the posts of which is some inscription, half effaced by time, relative to "steaks and chops," make a courteous

salute to the young lady enshrined amid lemons, pewter-pots, and "goes" in the bar, turn sharply to the left, and you are in the coffee-room of my tavern.

It certainly is the most extraordinary place! What a low ceiling! how dark! what old-fashioned furniture! what an air of age (from the senior customer, who has been in the habit of coming here since 1804 to the latest appointed waiter, who first made his appearance some sixteen years ago) surrounds everything and everybody! I have been known here for seven years; and yet, I give you my honour, I dare no more speak sharply to the waiters, or talk above my breath, than I dare poke the Archbishop of Canterbury in the ribs, or be facetious with the head of my office.

That old gentleman sitting at the far table is an eminent soap-boiler, who never misses a day, except Sundays, at this house. See how artistically he has tucked his napkin under his chin, to avoid greasing his buff-waistcoat. With what caution he carves the roast fowl just set before him; and how his eyes gloat over the mushroom sauce! To him, Edward the head-waiter is friendly and confidential; to me, he is as yet distant and haughty: for him he provides the inside of "The Times," I am regaled with the outside of "The Advertiser." Do I com-

plain? No: I am happy in being noticed in any way by such an eminent man, who has more money than I can ever hope to attain; who is petted by some of the first merchants in London; who has his portrait over the fireplace of my tavern (he is represented in the act of opening a bottle of port; and the two curls on his forehead and the twinkle in his eye have been vividly portrayed by the artist), and who is never flurried, annoyed, or put out, however many orders he may receive at once, or however impatient the appetites of his customers.

If you put it forcibly to me, I must admit that the appointments of my tavern are rather too simple and patriarchal in their character. There is no carpet, as you remark; and though I should think that the sanded floor must be preferred by the gentlemen from the neighbouring retail shops, who, later in the evening, give up their minds to pipes and grog, I am bound to confess that it is to me objectionable. The seats, too, might be stuffed at a very little expense, and some additional space made for your legs. I heard this once suggested to Edward by a novice at the house; his look I shall never forget, nor his words: "You may go to your Simpsons, your Werrys, and Dooburgers, for cut glass and ornaminks; people comes to *us* for somethin' to eat, not to look at." And he was right; what you do get to eat is cer-

tainly unexceptionable of its kind. Chops, steaks, plain joints, fowls with mushrooms, beef-steak puddings; and on Saturdays, at six o'clock, tripe and onions, all splendidly dressed, and of first quality. Count not on *entrées*, credit not any French name you may see in the bill of fare—the cook at my tavern is vague in these points; but try him with the things I have named, and my salary against Rothschild's cheque-book but you are delighted.

The frequenters of my tavern do not vary much; they are nearly all regular customers; as Edward once, in a burst of confidence, remarked to me, "We aint like them houses as sticks red chops and juicy steaks in their windows to 'tice the people passin': that's all werry well for 'ungry clerks and that sort of people: our diners is a'most reglars, cut and come again—that's how we does it." Old merchants from neighbouring counting-houses; a few country squires, who make a rule of stopping here when they come to town; two or three clerks from the Draft and Docket, with occasionally a pressman or two (they sit in pairs under the window, and all through their dinner are nervously scribbling on thin tissue-paper), are its principal supporters; the Manchester warehousemen before alluded to come in in the evening; and, after hot suppers, keep it up convivially until all hours of the night.

Edward himself is the mainstay of the place; I believe, without him it would not do a tithe of the present business. He is so quiet, so placid, so utterly the reverse of all other waiters. He never says, "Coming, sir;" he always has change; he wears silk stockings; and shoes with bright silver buckles in them, in place of the traditional pumps now always seen. When asked for pale ale he shrugs his shoulders, ignoring Bass, Allsopp, and all of their race. When half-and-half is demanded he produces a mixture of porter and stout; the noisiest gent is cowed by his venerable appearance, and meekly sucks his stick instead of rapping it on the table.

In a word, the old man is a character; the place of his abode is quaint and ancient: to the roysterer, the haunter of *cafés*, *restaurants*, and French houses, it will offer no attractions; but by that class which has been christened by a well-known author, whom I am proud to call my friend, "the mooners," quiet, systematic lovers of peace, and good eating combined, it will be highly esteemed; and, when once visited, rarely departed from.

CHAPTER VII.

"PANDEMONIUM, ETC."

SOME years ago there was published weekly in London a newspaper called "The Scarifier," and a very pleasant paper it was, and conducted in the most gentlemanly manner. It has been for some time defunct; but during its publication no periodical enjoyed a greater popularity, or was more extensively read by all classes of the community: the higher orders purchasing it to see whether they themselves were assailed (and perhaps for the chance of a sly grin at their friends), while by the lower classes it was perused with avidity for its bitter and unscrupulous attacks upon respectability in general. Nor were these attacks confined to remarks on the religious and political sentiments entertained by the persons animadverted upon. Sly little inuendoes as to which gentlemen were *au mieux* with which ladies (the names very slightly disguised indeed, and stars and asterisks most sparingly used); broad hints as to by what means old Crœsus made his

fortune, or for how much Frailson sold his vote; rhymes of more than questionable decency, and *double entendres* of the broadest kind, were among the contents of this amiable journal, one or two columns of which were regularly devoted to the interests of the gambling world, and bore the heading which I have chosen for this chapter. There would you learn how "the little Nick in Bury Street had done a snug business during the week, the blue-bottles having taken matters easily and not looked down upon it," with various other information of the same choice nature. This journal, as I have stated, no longer exists, but the gambling-houses whose transactions were so faithfully recorded in its columns, though illegal, and as such frequently prosecuted, yet flourish in the English metropolis. It is to one of these places that I would in imagination convey my reader; and, in the first place, I will beg him to take his stand by me on the pavement in front of the present Royal Italian Opera, once Covent Garden Theatre.

It is half-past twelve o'clock, and the opera is just over. Mrs. Rumble Fudge's carriage "stops the way," and stentorian voices announce that Lady Popham Weasel is "coming down." Stand aside, and see her pass. "Poor old lady," you say, "how glad she will be to take off her finery and go to

bed." Simple and innocent art thou, my friend! Her ladyship will waggle her bewigged old head in two or three of the first drawing-rooms in London to-night, and do her best towards removing the remaining bloom from the characters of several ladies and gentlemen before she goes to sleep.

And now you tell me you wish to see life! While searching your old uncle's bookcase at Clodborough, you found a book called "Life in London," illustrated with particularly vivid plates, showing gentlemen in long blue coats with brass buttons and curious hats, engaged as spectators at horse-races, prize-fights, cock-fights, dog-fights, and often in the company of ladies with low dresses and high waists, and feathers in their heads. You have also asked me one or two questions about some apocryphal place called "The Finish;" and I know you imagine life in London to consist in breaking lamps, insulting the protective forces, and treating the lowest rabble at some ginshop in Covent Garden. You are mistaken, my friend! We have too wholesome an awe of Mr. Henry and other dignitaries of the bench to attempt either to break lamps or to attract the notice of the police in any way, for the "Finish" for those who do so is generally the station-house and seven days with hard labour; and as for Covent Garden, the days of its glory are passed!

Those wonderful places which the *roué* of thirty years ago will talk to you of as "cribs of the first water," are all abandoned and desolate. I do not know a better place for a man to indulge a passion for moralising than Bow Street, or any street in the neighbourhood of what were once the national theatres.

Think of what these places were when "George the Fourth was king," blazing with chandeliers, gilt mouldings, crimson hangings; every night ringing with drunken merriment and licentious wit; now, dirty, paintless, and silent as the grave; in the daytime opened as oyster-shops or small greengrocery stores; at night, all closed and deserted. The late-hour-keeping society of London has moved westward, and become much refined by the transition; and the hotels, which were formerly patronised on account of their proximity to the haunts of (so-called) pleasure, are now only used by old gentlemen from conventional recollections, or very young ones from military seminaries, country barracks, or the universities, whose only knowledge of the world is derived from books, and those books of an antiquated date.

You are getting bored by my prosings; I have finished. Come, we have reached the aristocratic neighbourhood of St. James's Street, and yonder

house—that one with the bright fanlight over the door—is the scene of our intended visit. Do you see those two police-constables, one on either side of the doorway? Some years ago the son of an eminent statesman, recently deceased, lost a very large sum of money in one of those places, and since that time the doors of all suspected gaming-houses have been watched by the police. They are supposed to take an accurate account of the number of persons who enter, their style, and apparent position in life.

They wish us "good night" as we pull the ivory knob communicating with a spring bell that does not make the usual clatter, but sounds only once; and for that "good night" you will, if you win, give half-a crown as you emerge into the cold grey light of morning. The sergeant passing on his rounds will see you slip the coin into the hand of his subordinate, will give you "good morning" as you pass, and, in all probability, be paid with a cigar for his civility. On the gay spirits of the metropolis do the proprietors of houses of this stamp mainly depend, and many little perquisites solace the arduous duties of the west-end night-policemen.

No sooner has the bell sounded, than, as in the story of the White Cat, the door is opened by an unseen hand, and on our entry it is immediately closed behind us; we find ourselves faced by a

second door, panelled with iron, and covered with green baize, with a small square aperture in the centre, at which a gleaming eye appears; I am recognised; an iron bar is swung back, two bolts withdrawn, and having ascended a flight of most softly-carpeted stairs, we stand within the walls of a London gambling-house.

You will observe that the first floor is that portion of the house in which play is carried on. The basement may be a tailor's or bootmaker's shop; the mysteries of the upper regions have never been penetrated, but the drawing-rooms contain the real Lares and Penates of the proprietors: and very handsome rooms they are; brilliantly lighted, warmly curtained, and plentifully mirrored. Look at the table spread out in the back-room and covered with cold fowl, ham, tongue, beef, and salads: these, with wines, spirits, and cigars, are provided gratuitously: indeed, the more you drink the better pleased are your hospitable entertainers.

Let us push through this knot of men lounging in the doorway and discussing racing matters—(what an odd thing it is that your horsy-doggy-kind of men always congregate in doorways!)—and make our way to the play-table. This, you will observe, is an ordinary billiard-table, furnished with pockets, cushions, &c.; and yonder, in the corner, stands a

rack of cues — an arrangement which has been adopted recently, in consequence of the frequent visits of the police. And now let us look round at the company.

That tall, dark man, standing at the centre of the table, is one of the proprietors of the house, and a handsome, dashing Israelite he is. He is very rich, always dresses to perfection, and, besides being the owner of two or three racers, keeps a cabriolet and a mail phaeton; in one or the other of which you may see him nearly every afternoon in the Park; and you seldom go down to dine, either at the Crown and Sceptre at Greenwich, or the Star and Garter at Richmond, on a Sunday, without finding his "trap" at the door during some portion of the evening. Idiotic Guardsmen, would-be-aristocratic stockbrokers, green hands from the universities, and fast youths about town, have paid for that vehicle, and honest Moss gives them a subdued, but intelligent, nod of recognition as he drives in it.

The sharp-looking, wiry little man, opposite to him, is the croupier. He calls the odds, and never makes the slightest miscalculation; sees that the proper sums are staked at a single glance; and helps his principal to pay the winners and sweep up the stakes of the losers. For this latter purpose they do not use rakes, such as you may have seen at

Wiesbaden or Aix, but small hooked sticks. The rakes would be too *prononcés* in the event of any magisterial interruption; and, moreover, from the size of the table, they are not required.

"Seven's the main!" shouts that tall, blond moustached, handsome man, taking up the box.

"Seven's the main!" repeats the croupier; "make your game, please; the castor's backing in at seven, gentlemen!" Down comes the box, out roll the dice: "Eleven's the nick," says the croupier; and stakes are swept up, winners paid, and a fresh main called, with inconceivable rapidity. That man with the dice-box in his hand is the type of a certain class. He is of excellent family, holds a commission in the Household Brigade, and is one of those fellows you see everywhere. Driving a drag full of other solemn and moustached Heavies to the Derby; leaning against the orchestra at the Opera, and examining the house by the aid of his enormous *lorgnette;* bestriding a beautiful horse in the Park, or ponderously waltzing at Almack's; he is always "about." He does not come here for the purpose of increasing his income, or even for the sake of excitement; he has to pass the house on his way home from his club, and having a horror of going to bed, looks in merely to pass another hour.

Of a very different stamp is the man next to him,

the old *militaire*, with the tightly-buttoned frock-coat, well-clipped grey whiskers, and carefully brushed hat. They call him "the General," for he is an old Indian officer with a small annuity, to which he largely adds by a systematic method of play. He is a regular attendant here; is never ruffled or put out; and is reckoned to win, on an average, three sovereigns a-night. I have met him in the daytime, walking with a graceful, attractive-looking girl, apparently his daughter or niece; and I have wondered whether she had any notion of her companion's nightly avocation.

One more sketch, and I have finished.

That heavy-eyed, dissipated-looking man in the brown great-coat, was once one of the gayest spirits at Cambridge. Brought up to the church, he conceived a violent disgust for a quiet life, and determined on entering the army. Play, that dreadful demon, which had cast a cloud over his otherwise brilliant college career, pursued him still; he became irretrievably involved, and was at length compelled to sell his commission. Since then he has existed, one can scarcely tell how; but, from the terms on which he appears to live with the proprietors, and from the fact that he is always seen here — the first to risk his few shillings at the commencement of the evening — he is believed to be an *employé*, or

what is commonly termed a "bonnet" of the establishment.

Occasionally—perhaps once in six months—there is a furious knocking heard at this outer door. Sledge-hammers resound against the iron panels, which fall in with a crash; the police enter, and find four or five gentlemen at supper, and several others playing at billiards in the front room. They are taken into custody, and the next morning appear before the magistrate. No implements of gambling are found on the premises, and the captives are discharged. Good night, my friend! Go home, and bless your lucky stars that you were born in a country where justice is always duly administered, and where there is but one law for the rich and for the poor.

CHAPTER VIII.

MY LOQUACIOUS FRIEND.

WHEN I am in a thoroughly attentive, listening humour, when I feel disposed to enjoy a cigar, undisturbed and tranquilly, I go round to my friend and fellow-labourer Jack Laffin, of whom I have made mention in "My Office."

No man on earth has so many anecdotes, or is more ready to relate them; you can never start a subject without his immediately replying, "That reminds me when I was——," and the listener is booked for a narrative of an hour's duration. As I have stated, he has been in every quarter of the globe, and has seen more varieties of life than most men; and besides the realities he has to relate, Jack is gifted with an imagination and a facility of composition which, while they materially enhance the interest of his own *vivâ voce* stories, have gained him admittance into several of the magazines of this metropolis.

I was at his house the other evening, and between the puffs of a cigar was narrating an adventure that

had happened to me a few nights previously in a railway carriage. Jack listened, grew fidgetty, asked for the "matariels," meaning thereby the whisky, sugar, and hot water, standing by my elbow, and commencing with "That reminds me of something which once happened to myself," told the following story:—

"You must know that in Canada the season of navigation generally comes to a close about the latter end of November. After the 26th of that month, the magnificent steamers that during the season ply between Quebec and Montreal, are put into safe quarters for the winter, and all traffic and travelling by water (with a few exceptions, confined to the Upper Province) is at an end until the ensuing April. The only communication between the two cities during this dreary period is carried on by means of sleighs, and the traveller who during the summer looked upon one hundred and eighty miles as a mere pleasant excursion passed on board a floating palace, surrounded by magnificent scenery and agreeable companions, finds his ideas considerably altered when he traverses the same distance, imprisoned for the greater part of two days and nights in a wretched box, with no companion but an uncouth driver, exposed to a temperature considerably below zero, half blinded by the drifting snow,

and fortunate if he escape with one good upset in every hour.

"One bitterly cold evening in January 1851, I took my seat in her majesty's mail, which stood at the door of Hough's livery stables in Quebec, ready for the usual trip to Montreal. Notwithstanding the kind hints of my friends as to the probable loss of my nose, toes, &c., from the intensity of the frost, I had determined to 'go through' the entire way without stopping; a very unusual proceeding at that time of year, as most travellers were glad to break the journey by a night's rest at a comfortable post-house on the road.

"The term, 'her majesty's mail,' suggests to you, I dare say, one of those admirable conveyances now out of date; but the pictorial mementos of which, published by Messrs. Fores, are so dear to the sporting men of England. A very different vehicle is her majesty's mail in Canada. Imagine a contrivance, closely resembling a small bathing-machine without wheels, painted red, having a piece of green baize or leather for a door, raised about a foot and a half from the ground upon two semicircular pieces of wood shod with iron, and furnished with a pair of long, unwieldy shafts. The interior is fitted up to contain two persons, the mail-bags are stuffed underneath the seat, and in front projects a board on

which stands the driver, ready to jump off at any moment, when his horses (for he drives tandem) require his assistance, or an unexpected hole in the road pitches travellers and mail-bags into the surrounding snow.

"On the afternoon named I happened to be the solitary occupant of this vehicle, and half-smothered in a coat of buffalo-skin, fur cap, fur gauntlets, and fur boots, I took my seat, having the pleasing prospect of at least eight-and-forty hours of incessant bump and jostle. The driver jumped up in front, and skilfully drove the tandem through the narrow streets of this strangely-built old city; a few moments' rapid driving brought us through St. John's Gate, and then we were fairly on the high road of our journey. The first two or three miles were passed over merrily enough; the horses were fresh, and the road so smooth from frequent traffic, that we slipped along at a capital pace, while the music of the numerous little bells attached to every part of the harness, combined with the clear, cold atmosphere, had such an exhilarating effect on my spirits that I began to consider the hardships to be encountered on the route were mere travellers' stories, and as such exaggerated, and little to be depended upon. This exhilaration did not prevent me from taking the opportunity of warming my hands and feet when

we changed horses at St. Ambroise, about nine miles from our starting-point, and I was sorry when an unearthly blast from the driver's horn summoned me to resume my seat. I now began to experience some of the delights of the journey, so vividly described by my friends in Quebec, as the road, no longer kept in order by the snow-plough, which the Quebec corporation are bound to have in use as far as St. Ambroise, was blocked up at every turn by large snow-drifts, through which the frightened horses, urged by the prayers and curses of the driver, plunged with all their strength. The bathing-machine swayed from side to side, now rushing forward with such velocity as to convince me that we had commenced the descent of some mighty precipice, then as suddenly coming to a dead stop, dealing me a stunning blow on the back of the head, and pitching poor François Tibaut, the driver, some five or six yards away; where he lay in the soft deep snow, struggling to regain his feet, but still retaining his hold on the reins, and calling on Sainte Marie and several other respectable saints to help him and his horses out of their disagreeable position. For five of the longest hours I can recollect we continued on our way, struggling through difficulties of this description, and the deep tones of midnight were vibrating through the frosty air as

we reached the village of Deschambault, where an hour's rest and a good supper are the rewards held out to all who succeed in surmounting the dangers and distresses of the first forty miles of the journey. Frozen and stupified as I felt when the mail-sleigh drew up at the door of the village inn, my attention was at once rivetted by the beauty of the prospect. The village is situated on a high and jutting bank of the St. Lawrence. On the opposite bank of the river, and distinctly visible in the brilliant moonlight, was the ancient *seigneurie* of Lotbinière, and along the river-side lay the villages of St. Croix, St. Antoine, and St. Pierre, with the tin-covered church spire of each hamlet looking like a mighty spectre wrapped in a winding-sheet of ice, watching over the repose of the slumbering inhabitants.

"The stage-house, or village *auberge*, is kept by a wealthy *habitan*, who in his own person unites the various occupations of farmer, magistrate, mail-contractor, postmaster, and general shopkeeper. His house has a wide-spread reputation for cleanliness and comfort, which it well deserves, and the traveller may safely calculate on receiving every accommodation when once he enters the abode of good Monsieur Hamblois. That man is open to outward influences has long been held an undoubted axiom, and the truth of it was proved this night; for the

sight of the warm, cosy room, and the excellent supper, had such an effect me, that very strong resolutions of progress were at once abandoned, and I gave notice to the driver that I should proceed no further on my route. I therefore settled myself comfortably into a large rocking-chair, and when, as I sat sipping my toddy and puffing my cigar, the sound of the departing mail-sleigh resounded in my ear, I felt exceedingly pleased that bravery had been vanquished by comfort, and that for once in my life I had succumbed.

"After half an hour of that pleasant drowsiness which a combination of warmth, ease, and tobacco, generally produces, I was aroused by the entrance of mine host, who, according to custom, came to have a few minutes' chat. At my invitation, he accepted a chair and a cigar, and I asked him one or two questions about the politics, progress, and general topics of the village, hoping that by this means we should be made happy; he enjoying the pleasure of talking, while I could listen, and, perhaps, fall asleep. The bait succeeded. Hamblois had just opened strongly upon *the* question of Canada—the 'annexation'—when the sound of several voices, engaged in apparently angry discussion in another part of the house, broke the thread of his discourse. Several times during the progress of my dinner had

this noise disturbed me; and I now asked my host the cause of such an outbreak at so late an hour. Poor Monsieur Hamblois was much discomfited. 'Ah, Monsieur!' said he, 'this little village has to-day been the scene of a very sad and strange event, by which the happiness of the two greatest favourites for miles round has been ruined for ever.' These few words roused my attention. I expressed a wish to hear more of the circumstances; and Hamblois, delighted at having caught a listener, related the following story:—'One bleak, snowy evening, in December, about six-and-twenty years ago, my father, who then lived in a small house which stood on this spot, was closing the shutters outside the house, when he was accosted by a stranger, who inquired if there was a house in the village where he could be furnished with his supper and lodgings for the night, as he was much fatigued, and unable to proceed, even if half-an-hour's walking would bring him to a place of public entertainment. My father told him that there was no *auberge* within fifteen miles: but in that time hospitality was never denied to passing travellers; an invitation was given and accepted; and within an hour the stranger was seated at our family supper-table, as much at his ease and as familiar with the whole party as if he had been a friend of some years' standing.

He told us that he was a French emigrant; that he had arrived at Montreal on his way to Quebec, at which latter place he understood that a man of his trade, a saddler and harness-maker, would be sure to meet with plenty of employment. Unfortunately, the steamer made her last trip the day previous to his arrival; the expense of the mail was too great for his limited resources; and he was, therefore, compelled to set out on foot and take what accommodation he could find on the road. His frank manner and cheerful countenance found favour with us all, and before he retired to rest, my father told him there was plenty of old harness in the village that required mending; and if he chose to remain, he would find employment for a fortnight at least, by which time he would have recovered from his fatigue, and be enabled to resume his journey with a few dollars in his pocket. The traveller, who was called Pierre Larue, gladly acceded, and the next day was seated in a spare room, surrounded by old saddles and harness, and apparently as much at home as if it had been his workshop for years. When all the repairs were finished, the curé employed him to make a new saddle; and the report of his cleverness was so widely spread among the neighbouring farmers, that before two months were over he had as much work as he could manage to

finish in the following three. Finally, resolving to stay in the village, he took a small farm, married Madeleine Roland, the daughter of old Jacques Roland the miller, rapidly extended his business, and at the end of his third year of marriage was a prosperous inhabitant, and the father of two thriving children, a boy and a girl. Calmly and steadily progressed his life, when one night (during the season when large rafts are constantly passing down the river from the Ottawa district, to supply the various ships that come to Quebec from all parts of the world in search of timber) the villages were aroused by the cries of a man who ran from house to house beseeching immediate aid in saving the lives of some men who were clinging to the floating pieces of a raft, that had been broken up by the violence of the storm. Quickly all the men of the village were at the river-side; canoes put out; and, by strenuous exertions, thirteen half-drowned men were saved. These sufferers were billeted about the village; and two of them accompanied Larue, who had been most active in the rescue, to his house. One of these men was evidently no stranger to his host, for Madame Larue remarked that they remained in close and earnest conversation for the remainder of the night; and the next day Larue told his wife that he was going to Montreal for several articles of trade

he required, and accordingly started with the raftsmen in a small tug steamer, taking his boy with him. From that journey he never returned. Days, weeks, months passed away; Madame Larue watched and watched, but no husband appeared; and at the end of two years, worn out by incessant anxiety, she found rest for her broken heart in the village churchyard. A rich farmer, who was childless, adopted little Madeleine as his daughter, and gave her his name. As Madeline Dubois, she grew up the beauty of the village; and, before she was seventeen, half a dozen of our young farmers in vain attempted to gain her affections. About this time a merchant in Montreal, with whom I had business transactions, wrote to me, recommending a young man as an assistant. I was glad to hear of an eligible person, as my business had so much increased that it had outgrown my powers of surveillance; and when the young man arrived, and had been a few weeks in the place, I found him such an acquisition, that I left the entire management of my shop in his hands. Louis Gaudet was, indeed, an excellent fellow; the entire village was warm in his praise; and Madeleine, who had laughed at her rustic admirers, could not resist the more polished advances of Louis. In a word, they were sweethearts; and old Farmer Dubois, finding they were devoted to each other,

not only made no objection to their union, but promised to establish them in a farm of his own, if they liked to make the trial. Thus far the course of their true love ran smooth, indeed. This day was fixed for the wedding; and the morning broke clear and cloudless, as if in compliment to the ceremony. All the village made holiday; the girls were flitting from house to house, borrowing and exchanging ribbons, flowers, and other little ornaments. The young men stood in the streets, conversing in little knots on Louis's good fortune; and at half-past ten a procession was formed at the house of Farmer Dubois, where the villagers, headed by Louis, had met, to conduct Madeleine to the church. My wife and daughters were in the throng; but I was sulking at home, as the mail happened to be later than usual, and I was compelled to wait and receive it. I stood at the door, and watched the procession coming down the green lane, and winding its way down the straggling village street towards the church. Scarcely had it passed my house, when the courier's horn announced the arrival of the mail, and I was delighted at the thought that I should, after all, be in time for the ceremony. I opened the mail-bag, and quickly found the packet addressed 'Deschambault.' It contained a letter for myself, and two newspapers

for the curé. Throwing the newspapers aside, I crumpled my letter in my hand, and set off at full speed for the church. When half-way up the street, I saw a group still lingering in conversation outside the church porch; and, believing that some time would yet elapse before the ceremony began, I broke the seal of my letter, and found it was from my old friend, the merchant of Montreal. My correspondent commenced by enumerating a list of articles recommended for my business, and by giving certain details respecting the markets, &c.; but on coming to the concluding paragraph, I found it worded in this manner:—'I hope Louis Gaudet still continues to give you the satisfaction you have so often expressed to me; the mystery connected with his birth has at length been cleared up by the confession of an old man, who died a few days back at a humble lodging-house in this town. On his death-bed he sent for a priest, and told him that he had deserted Louis, and left him, a helpless child, at my door. It also appears that Louis has a sister living somewhere near your neighbourhood, under the care of a certain Farmer Dubois, whose name she has adopted. The old man left proof of all these circumstances, and you may tell Louis (whose real name is Larue) I shall place them in his hands on the first opportunity, and in the meantime desire

him to seek out his sister and announce his relationship.'

" ' My wonder and horror at this intelligence you can scarcely imagine: for a moment I stood stupified, but the thought that in a few moments *Louis might be made the husband of his own sister*, gave me strength to dash up the steps and into the church. A group was standing round the altar, the priest was approaching the kneeling couple, but as soon as I could make my parched tongue give utterance to my words, I called aloud, ' Stop, Louis! this marriage must not proceed!' Louis started to his feet with a wild and frightened look; all eyes were turned upon me, and I gave the letter I had just received into the hands of the curé, exclaiming, ' Ah, Monsieur! read, read this before proceeding with the ceremony.' The curé ran his eye hastily over the first paragraph, but when he came to the conclusion a flush overspread his pale cheek, he looked mournfully on the young couple, for an instant hesitating what course to pursue; but at length advancing towards them he said, in a voice broken with emotion, ' My children, the All-merciful Dispenser of good has providentially interposed to save you from a step that would have embittered all your future lives; bow yourselves, then, to his will: you never can be

man and wife! Nevertheless, Louis, take Madeleine to your breast—*she is your sister!*'

"'It is useless for me, Monsieur,' said good Mr. Hamblois, with the tears running down his cheeks, 'to continue this sad story. Madeleine fainted, and was removed by my wife and the other women, but poor Louis, uttering one wild cry of agony, fell heavily on the altar steps; we carried him here, and for more than two hours he lay on the bed sobbing and muttering unmeaning expressions. At length he broke out into a fit of glaring insanity, and he is now in a room at the other end of this corridor, attended by two or three young men, whose utmost endeavours are required to hold him down in his bed. I must now go myself and see him, so I wish Monsieur good night.'

"I needn't tell you," said Jack Laffin, "that, tired as I was, after Hamblois's visit I got very little sleep. I lay tossing and tumbling, and in a short time was thoroughly aroused by the shrieks of the wretched maniac, which resounded through the house. For the whole night he lay in this horrible state, shrieking, calling upon Madeleine, and cursing and struggling with his attendants. Early in the morning, however, he broke a blood-vessel, and death put a period to his sufferings. Of the poor girl I never

learned the fate, for the next morning a party of travellers, who changed horses at the post house, kindly made room for me on their sleigh, and never again during my stay in Canada had I heart to revisit the little village of Deschambault."

CHAPTER IX.

MY NEW-YEAR'S EVE.

I CONFESS to a love for New-Year's Eve. I have been called a "leveller," and stigmatised as "fast," for expressing my dislike to certain received conventionalities; such as five-act plays, stage-coaches, whist parties, *conversaziones*, and old English fare: but for New-Year's Eve and the "manners and customs of y^e^ Englyshe" at that particular anniversary I have entertained, and do still entertain, the highest veneration and regard.

I had the same feeling for Christmas once, and notwithstanding my usual family party was broken up, that I no longer got "tipped," as when at school, or looked forward to the entrance of pudding and mince-pie with the relish of by-gone days, and that the weather was generally damp and muggy, instead of brisk and bracing, I endeavoured to walk about with a genial good-humoured face, and to render my conversation a species of perpetual carol.

But last Christmas Eve I went to Leadenhall

Market to see the purchasers of turkeys, and got hustled and abused, and had my pocket picked, and was very nearly given in charge as a thief myself, for in the crush I pressed my arms close to my sides and managed to get the neck of a fowl comfortably under my elbow; with which fowl I, in happy ignorance, was pushing my way, while an infuriated elderly female, the "rightful owner," was screaming after me, addressing me as a "duffer," and inciting the bystanders to mob me. This year, too, when I patrolled the streets on the same anniversary, I saw more drunkenness, riot, quarrelling, and smashed faces, than on any other of the three hundred and sixty-five nights — Boxing and St. Patrick's nights always excepted.

True, the shops were as gay as ever; the plums, currants, and citron as tempting, the holly and mistletoe as green, and the beef as red; the same gay ribbons done up in rosettes, like the bows worn by stewards at the Hanover Square balls, hung from the stomachs of the turkeys; and a large fish at a shop in Oxford Street (of course not the same fish, but one of a similar species) had his annual placard skewered on to him, asking "Wouldn't you like me for dinner to-morrow?" But the purchasers seemed listless and depressed; they preferred unpleasant-looking skinned rabbits to beef; and the enticing tones of the butchers,

who, addressing the female part of the population as "my dear," and the male as "old feller," entreated them to "buy, buy!" fell unheeded on the pushing, squabbling crowd. The cabman that took me home had been keeping festival before the proper time, and on my declining to entertain his plea of double fare because it was Christmas, he assailed me with opprobrious epithets, and finally volunteered a gift of "something as should make me see two" (unmentionable word!) "Christmasses in one." So that, though the day itself passed more merrily than I had anticipated, I began to feel that, as to myself, the halo of Christmas had departed, and that in endeavouring to be extraordinarily jolly, benevolent, and blithe-hearted on that occasion, I was cherishing a delusion and a snare.

But the enchantment lingering round New-Year's Eve had not yet been torn away by the greatest destroyers of illusion, Time and the World. It was still a delight to me to sit on that night surrounded by a pleasant circle, not telling long stories, for that is a process which would rob any evening of its enchantment; nor singing songs, which is still worse; but passing the time in social conversation, recalling the benefits and endeavouring to forget the annoyances of the departing year; and when the bells pealed forth his death, to clasp the hands of those

dearest to me, and to wish them, during the reign of the new monarch, a fervent "God speed!"

It happened that this year I had received several invitations for New-Year's Eve. One was to a friend's chambers in Gray's Inn, but this I had determined not to accept, as I knew that it meant unlimited loo till eleven, kidneys, broiled bones, oysters and stout till twelve, whisky-punch, tobacco, and comic songs till four; and in my present frame of mind this did not suit me.

Another invitation was from a person whose acquaintance I had made through diurnal rides in the same omnibus, a gentleman with white choker, damp black beaver gloves, and no shirt-collar, who offered to show me how the Primitive Howlers, of which set he is a deacon, usher in the new year. This I might have accepted, for I have a passion for seeing all curious phases of society, but for a reason which, in confidence, reader, I will communicate to you. Know then that I am in love, and not only in love, but engaged, and the object of my affections had asked me to come to the paternal mansion, where a few friends were about to do homage to departing '52. I am also a member of a very pleasant little club (the "Fly-by-nights" we call ourselves, and meet at the "Peck o' Maut" in Chancery Lane), and I had heard rumours of divers bowls of punch

and a grand field-night on the same occasion; so I thought I could combine these two last opportunities, going to Cadog— (no! I won't say where she lives!) first, and dropping in at the club on my way home. But fate, who makes emperors of blacklegs, and leading tragedians of idiots, had determined that this plan should not be carried into operation, and how that was brought about I will now relate.

I must tell you that I am a clerk in a very large Government establishment, and that in my office one of the clerks has to be on duty every night, to attend to any urgent matters and to transact the current business of the department. A bed-room and sitting-room are provided for him, and there he remains from four o'clock in the afternoon, when the other men go away, until ten o'clock the following morning when they return. I need scarcely say that this duty is very much disliked by us; and I and my fellow-clerks (we don't speak of each other, though, as "fellow-clerks," we call ourselves "brother-officers," in the same way that the night duty is officially expressed by being "in waiting," but we call it "on guard;" it sounds more military and gentlemanlike); I and my brother-officers, then, reckon long before Christmas to whose turn it will fall to be victimised on the approaching festal days.

I had never yet been the unlucky one, and at the

present time I saw myself clear to the 9th or 10th of January, when on the morning of the 31st of December I was informed by one high in authority that "in consequence of the illness of one of the gentlemen, my services would be required that night." You might have knocked me down with a sheet of foolscap; on recovering, I flew to all my brother-officers to induce them to relieve me from the duty—fool that I was: of course they were all engaged; some were going to parties, some into the country; the excuses made by the wedding guests in the parable were nothing to those I received: one man actually told me he had some favourite chickens which he expected would hatch during the night, and he must be present at the operation.

Nothing was left me but to fling myself into a Hansom, tear off to *her*, explain the circumstances, and await the result. I acknowledge I felt an inward presentiment that I should not perfectly succeed; for it is an extraordinary thing, you can never persuade young ladies that you are not glad of the excuse to be away from them, though they know that the cause of your absence is disagreeable to yourself.

My anticipations were fully realised. I found her at the piano practising a song with a most elegant frontispiece, two young Oriental ladies with black

eyes and ditto hair, unfastened chemisettes, and a general appearance of white and gold about them, with the words—"Rest not, but hope ever" (not very appropriate to the picture perhaps, but poetical, heart-broken, and all that sort of thing) printed underneath in emblazoned letters. When she saw me she started, and being unable to account for my appearance at that early hour of the day, except from causes of illness, discharge from situation, or some other misery, nearly fainted in my arms.

When her fears were calmed, and "soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again," I began to pave the way for my horrible disclosure, which came at length in all its appalling terrors. I felt the fairy form reclining on my manly breast gradually assume a more erect position; the hand "so often clasped in mine" unclasped itself, and began to perform that satanic symphony, popularly known as the "devil's tattoo," upon the table, and the affectionate regard previously beaming in her countenance melted away, and was succeeded by a cold, uncomfortable placidity. Now, that placid look is what I am most afraid of! I don't mind a burst of rage. I can endure being called a monster, and accused of "having become quite changed lately," but that look of quiet determination is to me what the petrel is to the sailor; and so, to carry out the novel simile, whenever I see it I get

under close canvas, haul up my weather-brace, and perform other T. P. Cooke-ish evolutions, significant of making ready for the worst.

"And so, dearest Emma," said I, "you see that I am compelled to stop in that horrid hole, instead of being with thee." (We are so affectionate, that we "thee and thou" each other like a couple of Quakers.)

"Oh!" said Emma, placidity itself, with the exception of a slight twitching of the muscles of the mouth,—"oh! of course you can't help it, and I know it will be very disagreeable to you; though, to be sure, on other occasions you have managed to make an exchange with some of your brother-officers, and I wished you particularly to come to-night. The Scantlings are coming, and you always admired Annie Scantling so much; and the Posers—Mary Poser, you know, whom you flirted with at the last Blenheim ball; and several friends of yours; and the Posers are going to bring Mr. Marklane."

Now my gentlest and dearest Emma had so admirably contrived this speech, that my heart at that moment metaphorically resembled a porcupine, with the exception that instead of quills it was stuck full of the sharpest and brightest daggers. Each person quoted had been a well-aimed blow. The Scantlings were horrible people; Annie Scantling,

" whom I admired so much," a tall, grenadier-like virgin of thirty; the Posers, also, horrible people; Mary Poser, a little fidgety girl of eighteen, all ringlets and animation, who would dance with you, sing to you, and flirt with you, whether you would or not, who was pronounced by fast young men to be a " stunning party," and by old ladies " a girl of great spirits." But, like one cunning at fence, Emma had reserved her sharpest thrust for the last. I am not, I believe, more ill-conditioned or worse-tempered than the generality of men; but I must confess to a dire hatred of Marklane! He is my *bête noire*, the skeleton at my banquet, the interior of my Dead Sea apple, the legitimate play after the pleasant farce,—in fact, my abomination. He is of the *genus* City, and a thorough specimen of it; at Garroway's he is a daily visitor, nightly does Harley Street claim him for its own. Always got up, regardless of expense, with the newest patterns on his trousers, the brightest varnish on his boots, with two inches of shirt-collar at the back of his neck, and with whiskers so tightly curled that you wonder how he ever manages to open his mouth, he may be seen daily during the season in the Park, either on horseback or lolling out of a very well-appointed cab. At those houses where " money-makes the man," where no assumption of pompous bearing, or

decoration of rooms with Wardour Street Ancestors, will hide the fact of the *parvenu* host having been a few months previously entirely unknown in the sphere into which he has been carried by the golden tide of prosperity, and where the servants announce wonderful city names, hitherto only known to you through the medium of mining companies' advertisements,—at these houses is Marklane to be met. Having once been sweet upon Emma, and I having gone through an operation practised in naval tactics, and "cut him out" with her, he naturally reciprocates my hatred, and drops me on every possible occasion; I have been told, is accustomed to mention me as "young red-tape," and I have positive information, that once when he was asked whether I was not connected with the press, replied that "he believed I was intrusted with the red-snow and large gooseberry paragraphs on some weekly paper." Like most of his class he despises literature, looking down upon authors as a set of gin-drinking, ragged-coat-wearing mortals, living from hand to mouth in roofless garrets; and I am firmly persuaded he thinks that one penny a line is the authorised scale of payment for all the articles, including leaders, in the principal London journals.

"Oh! Marklane's coming, is he, Emma?" said I, as my milk of human kindness gradually began

to curdle; "then, of course, *my* society will not be so much missed,—you always find him so *very* agreeable!"

"He need not be *particularly* pleasant to appear so by the side of some people when they are in a bad temper," said Emma, "though he is always very polite, and—oh! he was a bootiffle darlings, he was!" (This last observation did not refer to Marklane, nor was it addressed to me, but to Emma's Scotch terrier, which at that moment crept out from under an ottoman, with its face, back, and legs, painted in alternate blue and red streaks. She had been having her portrait taken as a new-year's gift for me, and during the artist's absence had borrowed his chalks for the purpose of ornamenting her dog); "he was a bootiffle darlings, and he shall go and talk to his naughty cross papa!"

I saw any further observation was useless; Emma was not inclined to be sentimental, I *was* inclined to be cross; the *amantium iræ*, according to the poet, would be a pleasant pastime enough, but he forgot to state how long a period generally elapses before the *integratio amoris* takes place: so I took a hasty, and not very affectionate farewell of Emma, and returned fierce and fuming to my office. I arrived just as every one was leaving. On seeing me entering the building at that time, some men,

who knew perfectly the cause of my return, asked me, with a grin, "If I had forgotten anything, and was going back for it?" Others called me "Old fellow," pitied me, and told me "not to mind, it would be all over to-morrow morning." I *could* have annihilated them, but merely smiled feebly, and went to my work. I worked hard till six o'clock, then, having had no refreshment all day, I left word where, if wanted, I could be found, and went to a neighbouring eating-house to dinner. The room was full, and to my idea every one appeared extraordinarily happy—I several times caught the words, "See the Old Year out!" which nearly drove me to desperation, so I seized the outside sheet of "The Times," and began studying the advertisements. I wondered whether "Fly-by-night" had ever found the "anchor" which he was perpetually wanting. I thought what a long time it must take "Slmpi" to read "Jde W.'s" notes to him, and how mad he'd be if he forgot the key to the cipher; and I became so confused with E. J. W.'s notions about Boreas sitting upon the Equator, and calling upon Hydaspes to "circumspice," that it was quite a relief when the waiter brought my dinner. I ate furiously, but having more work to do, the luxury of drinking was denied me. I returned to work. One solitary man I found getting up some arrears in his duty. He

was a conscientious person, and liked, as he said, "to begin the New Year all clear and fresh-like." He was a thorough clerk, lived at Dalston, had a wife and seven children, whom he supported on a hundred and ten pounds a-year, and was in a perpetual state of ink. In my extremity I clung even to this being; I asked him to stay, and offered what I thought would be to him the most congenial beverage, a cup of tea. He was humble and thankful, but declined; he had promised to go home early, and make the boys a bowl of punch to drink the New Year in! Dissipated mortal! no wonder he refused my tea! At eight o'clock he offered, rather than wished me, a happy New Year, and took his departure. The servant appointed to wait upon us brought the tea, and expressed a hope that I should not want her any more, as she was going out. I gave her permission, she vanished, and I was left alone.

Alone! to pass the night alone! It is just half-past eight, and I am accustomed to sit up till the small hours: I cannot, therefore, go to bed; I should toss and tumble, and worry myself into a fever; I must, therefore, sit up alone! Alone! no man of any sense is alone when he has a book; and I *am* a man of sense, and *have* a book. If I recollect rightly, in my closet I have a volume of "Ten-

nyson," a volume of "Paul de Kock," a few cigars, and a bottle of brandy. With what Mr. Wright calls these "concomitants," what man could not get through a few hours? unless, indeed, he were a blind teetotaller, and then they would not much help him. So I go to my closet, put my hand in my pocket, and—find I have forgotten my keys. By all that is miserable, I have! Not expecting to be called upon, I left them lying on my dressing-table, where, in all probability, they are now tranquilly reposing. I am, therefore, bookless, brandyless, tobaccoless—no! not the last, for I find an old black stump of a clay pipe on the mantel-shelf, and some particularly strong Cavendish in the inkstand. (This must have been left there by Wood; his things are always lying about in everybody's way, and it is not at all uncommon to find his boots on your writing-table, or a pair of old gloves in your sugar-basin.) So I pull a chair in front of the fire—a large one, by the way; Government pays for the coals—and her Majesty's ministers would not grudge a poor devil *one* comfort on such a night as this, and commence to smoke doggedly. I stare vacantly at an old map of "Twenty miles round London," which hangs over the mantel-piece, and which has been riddled in several places with red-hot pokers by sportive clerks; I watch the smoke curling about my head;

I make "rings" with it; I take the pipe from my mouth, and begin to whistle; the "Prima Donna" is the tune that issues from my lips; I remember it was to that air I first sarabanded with Emma: I cease, and commence afresh with a tune which, in the original, is wedded to words expressive of the joviality with which some anonymous member of the "Society of Friends," in company with his spouse, performed Terpsichorean evolutions! I stop this also, for it brings to my mind the party at Gray's Inn, the comic songs, and the unlimited loo. About this time they are just in the height of their game; what would I give to be among them! with what happiness would I take that forlorn hope "Miss!" how gladly would I even lose my money for the sake of hearing a jovial voice, and enjoying a hearty laugh! From this party my thoughts wander to another — to my own especial party — to Emma. The "few friends" must have arrived at the paternal mansion.

How my absence must be remarked, and what pleasant things will be said about it! Emma's aunts, who, because I have an amiable weakness for check trowsers and Hansom cabs, look upon me as a sort of Apollyon of the nineteenth century; Emma's aunts will note my absence, and conclude I am out dissipating." Her elder sister, a pleasing virgin

of five-and-thirty, with as much feeling as a poor-law guardian, and as cheerful-looking as Vauxhall in November, will repeat her prediction that "my fancy for Emma was too violent to last;" and Mark-lane—when I think of him I am ready to swoon—how will they pass the evening? If they play a round game, he will sit next her and "go partners;" if they play "how, when, and where," or "my lady's toilette," he will still manage to be close to her; or if they even are more boisterous and indulge in "blind-man's buff" (for I have known such a pastime find admirers even among staid grown-up people), he will be perpetually blindfolded, and always catch her, that he may pass his horrible hands over her hair and face to enable him to identify her.

Will he not do all this, for have I not done it myself? Oh! ye young men, who have been evening-party idlers and butterflies of fashion, ye know not what terrible tortures of mind are in store for you when once regularly "engaged!"

Pondering over all this, my jaw gradually relaxes, the pipe drops from my mouth, and I fall asleep in my chair. What I dream I know not. My modern life, my old German student days, my love, my happiness, and my present misery, are all inextricably involved. I am walking on a thoroughly continental road, all white dust and poplar-trees,

when I meet Emma in spectacles and a red cap with a large peak. She tells me it is my turn to be on duty at the office; and, in confirmation of her statement, shows me a large book with a title-page, "Marklane & Co. Ledger." My bewilderment is carried on for what appears to me to be countless ages; the broiled bones, the comic songs, the "Primitive Howlers," the Scantlings, and the unlimited loo, each in turn takes possession of my brain; and just as I am in the very act of committing murder on Marklane, by garotting him with his own stiff shirt-collar, the clanging of a thousand bells from the neighbouring steeples at once recalls me to consciousness, and gives a hearty welcome to the New Year.

Cold, half-stupified, and entirely miserable, I creep into bed. A note from Emma by the first post, however, restores me to happiness at an early hour in the morning, and the reader will perhaps be gratified to hear that Mr. Marklane was prevented from spending his New-Year's Eve in Cadog — (never mind!), and that Emma and I were shortly married!

CHAPTER X.

A DAY-DREAM AT MY CLUB.

NOTWITHSTANDING the terrific clatter made by Mr. Tocsin, Q.C., who will bawl *nisi prius* jokes and the latest pun of Mr. Justice Jeffries across the Club coffee-room, I managed to make a very good dinner, and to keep my attention tolerably well fixed upon "The Times;" in fact, I was glancing over the front sheet, and wondering whether the runaway initials would ever return home and be received by their afflicted friends, when my eye was arrested by the flaming advertisement of "The Patagonian Giant Reclaiming Company;" and, to my astonishment, I saw occupying the place of honour in the list of directors the name of my friend "The Honourable Malcolm Macbeth, Kensington, and The Haggis, Renfrewshire." Now, as I knew that this gentleman enjoyed an irregularly-paid younger brother's income of 100*l.* a-year, and subsisted on that and what he could make by his whist-playing, I felt curious to learn something about the company in

which he held such a prominent station; and on reading the prospectus, found that "this company was instituted for the purpose of reclaiming the aboriginal inhabitants of Patagonia, whose enormous stature and strength enables each of them, when properly domesticated, to perform the work of ten Europeans." The prospectus proceeded to dilate upon the manifold advantages to be derived from reclaiming the Patagonians and training them as household servants, miners, field-labourers, and standard footmen; and concluded by giving a detailed form of the application for shares. Running my eye on to the following advertisement, which was that of "The Polynesian House Exporting Society," I again found the Honourable Malcolm Macbeth's revered name; and, pursuing my investigations, I discovered that "The Tredyddlum Lead Mining Company," and "The Terra del Fuego Gold Company," also profited by his sage experience as director. And then, as Mr. Tocsin had followed the rest of the diners to the smoking-room, and the great coffee-room was almost deserted, I put down the newspaper, threw myself back in my chair, and began to muse and wonder upon the extraordinary speculations which are daily being launched upon the ever-flowing tide of city life, many of which, after tossing restlessly for a few months, sink, and carry

down with them the few good and true men who have been led into them through ignorance, while the sharpers and swindlers jump overboard at the crash, and attach themselves to some equally stable concern, which as yet is floating. Think, for instance, of the Honourable Macbeth's being a director of anything in which respectability and money are concerned! His father, the late lamented Earl of Dunsinane, was so disgusted at his recklessness and debauchery, that he left him only the 100*l.* a-year before-mentioned; and his brother, the present Earl, is reported to have emulated the opossum described by the poet, and to be "up a tree." Macbeth himself lives over a tobacconist's in Kensington High Street; and as for "The Haggis, Renfrewshire," did not I see the catalogue of sale of the effects, furniture, noble library, and million ounces of plate of that romantic castle, "the property of a nobleman going abroad?" And yet, on the strength of the aristocratic prefix to his noble name, on the strength of the vagueness of the word "Kensington" (he *may* have rooms in Holland House or the Palace itself), and on the strength of that apocryphal castle, which he has never seen since his infancy, Malcolm Macbeth is applied to by speculative sharpers, who know his wants, and loans out his position in so-

ciety at the rate of two guineas a board-day. Thinking over all this, I got yet further into the arm-chair, and became more and more reflective upon public tastes and projects. I thought of the railway mania, when the great Dodgeson made more money in half an hour than I (holding an appointment under Government, honourable and lucrative, of course, as all Government appointments are) shall do in my lifetime; when great commanders by land and by sea, eminent churchmen, merchants whose names were as good as Sir Thomas Gresham's, statesmen, lawyers, and every class of the community, subscribed to the testimonial presented to the great Dodgeson, as a token of the high value in which they held his share-selling talent, and not a few of whom, the week after, when the smash came, went up into their dressing-rooms on the second floor, and, after praying God to have mercy on their innocent wives and children, put the pistol-barrel or the laudanum-bottle to their mouths, and finished their career. I thought of the present time, and remembered how Jack Feathers (whom I was always laughing at for constantly poking about in the hen-house behind his cottage at Highbury) came and told me the other day he had made one hundred and twenty pounds by selling a dozen Cochin China fowls of his own rearing.

"They're as big as donkeys, sir," Jack said; "and they eat so much, that their present owner will have to sell them again soon, in self-defence."

Absorbed in these thoughts, I was looking vacantly out of the coffee-room window (my club, I should mention, is the Philo-Shakesperian, close by Covent Garden), little heeding the noise in the street—little heeding the band of Ethiopian melodists, who were expressing in verse their conjectures as to what would be the probable remarks made by their Uncle Gabriel—little heeding the evolutions of two small boys, who were pointing down at the open kitchen windows, showing each other what they should like to have, rubbing their infantine stomachs with the true pantomimic manner expressive of delight, and rousing the ire of the bearded *artiste* who presides over these regions by addressing him as "Frenchy;"—I say, I was looking at all these things without seeing them, when my attention was attracted by a flower-girl, who, holding up her basket to the window, said, "Buy my fine tulips, sir; only a penny each." With my mind yet full of the recent subjects of my thoughts, these words opened a new field for reflection, and finally I fell into the deepest reverie upon that most wonderful of all wonderful manias, which disturbed the minds of men in the seventeenth century—the

mania for tulips. How all that I had ever read on that subject—and at one time it was a favourite one with me—rose before my mind! How well I recollected the fearful number of articles of a heterogeneous character which some infatuated gentleman gave for a single root of "The Viceroy." Let me see! What were they? Two lasts of wheat, four lasts of rye, four fat oxen, three fat swine, twelve fat sheep, two hogsheads of wine, four tons of beer, two tons of butter, one thousand pounds of cheese, a complete bed, a suit of clothes, and a silver beaker! Even supposing the wine to have been bad Marsala, the beer of that peculiar species popularly known as "swipes," supposing that the suit of clothes was made by Rabshakeh and Brothers, and that the complete bed was one "intended for emigrants," what a bargain the tulip-merchant must have had! He must have been a heartless fellow, too, or he would never have taken the "silver beaker." It is mentioned the last in the list, and was very likely a child's mug, with "Georgy's" name duly inscribed on it, upon which the tulip-vender cast his rapacious eyes as he was concluding the transaction.

The old author, from whom I derived my principal knowledge of this extraordinary time, tells us, I remembered, that this wonderful game of tulip

trading was followed by high and low, rich and poor, daily traders in the city, and men about the court, who had never held a pen or balanced an account. "'The first noblemen, citizens of every description, mechanics, seamen, turf-diggers, chimney-sweeps, footmen, maid-servants, and old-clothes' women," he says, joined in the pursuit. My lord, who had ordered about and cursed at his valet—(lords used to do such things in those days — isn't it a blessing that times and lords are changed?)—my lord fell from his high station by a reckless course of tulips, and John the coachman, who had often driven him to Whitehall (for the Act of Parliament forbidding men to ride in coaches, on account of the effeminacy of the process, had just been repealed)—John, who had made a lucky hit by buying Admiral Van der Eyks and Schilders at a low price, and selling them at a high one, dined off gold plate, and knew that his master was obliged to lie *perdu* in Whitefriars from the alguazils of the sheriff. Think what the traffic was when the traffickers could not do their business quietly in shops, but had an Exchange of their own; formed laws, had notaries and clerks, and published a regular list of the prices of the various species of plants—just such a list as you may now see stuck up against Messrs. Bull and Bearson's door in Cornhill, only

that the contents referred to Viceroys and Semper Augustuses, instead of Tredyddlums and Terra del Fuegos. And think, above all, that "a speculator often offered and paid large sums for a root which he never received and never wished to receive, while another sold roots which he never possessed or delivered." Does not that cast the ancient and manly art of cockfighting into the shade? and does not the mind get more confused even than by the technical description of a concert or the perusal of the defunct Fonetic Nuz, on learning that "often did a nobleman purchase of a chimney-sweep tulips to the amount of two thousand florins, and sell them at the same time to a farmer; and *neither the nobleman, chimney-sweep, nor farmer had the roots in their possession, or wished to possess them.*" It is beyond my feeble power of brain; and I only know that if Mrs. Mary Johnson, of Covent Garden, has not got the peas which I have ordered for to-morrow's consumption, or if my opposite neighbour, Clay, the eminent cutty-pipe manufacturer, expresses a wish to have the said peas, and I sell him the reversion of them, Mrs. Johnson, Clay, and I are in a fair way for Bedlam, and ought instantly to be invested with strait-waistcoats. The details of the transactions are more and more wonderful; a merchant sold to another a tulip-root for 7000 florins,

to be delivered in six months; but as, during the interval, the price had fallen, the purchaser, according to agreement, paid only ten per cent. "So that my father," says the son of the vender, "received 700 florins for nothing; but he would much rather have delivered the root itself for 7000."

The shorter the term of the contract, the brisker the trade; and, in order that the luxury of gambling should be denied to no class of the community, so high and low-priced kinds of tulips were procured, the roots were weighed, that an imagined whole might be divided, and that people might have not only whole, but half and quarter lots.

As came the railway crisis in 1845, so did the tulipomania come to an end in 1637; all the original speculators had by that time either made enormous fortunes or been ruined, and the new generation of adventurers were either wiser or less speculative, and did not care to embark in such enterprises. The value of the roots falling lower and lower, disputes between buyer and purchaser, who had received and given orders while the mania was at its height, became so frequent, that deputies from the tulip-dealers were sent to Amsterdam, and the Dutch Government settled the matter by decreeing that every vender should offer his tulips to the purchaser, and in case he refused to receive

them, the vender should either keep them himself or sell them to another, and have recourse to the purchaser for any loss he might sustain.

Pondering long and deeply over this extraordinary period, the elegant pattern of the Kidderminster carpet (upon which the prints of Dr. Stamper's boots are indelibly impressed) gradually faded from my view, the empty decanter on my table assumed the appearance of Malcolm Macbeth, only exaggerated and Patagonian-like in stature, and carried out my recent train of thought by addressing me with "How are you, my tulip?" and it was not until I heard the vigorous cough of old General Fleming that I roused myself from the repose into which I had fallen, and immediately beat a retreat.

CHAPTER XI.

MY OLD SCHOOL.

Sir Rupert de Bienfaisant's Foundation School.

THE HEAD-MASTER

REQUESTS THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY

TO THE

ANNUAL SPEECHES AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRIZES,

Thursday, July —th, 185—.

Such was the card that I found awaiting me one evening on my return from business, and such the invitation accorded me by the head of that institution which, at one time, I abhorred as the vilest hole on earth, and which I now regard with a warm and kindly affection. Sir Rupert de Bienfaisant was a good old fellow, who lived in the sixteenth century, and who employed some of the capital which had been amassed by his ancestors (fine old robbers of the "What ho, malapert!" and "By'r lady, serf, thou

hang'st!" period of history), in founding a school for the education of "forty poore children, sons of the townsmenne of Lowebarre;" to these forty may now be added some sixty or eighty more boys, whose parents, by no means townsmenne of Lowebarre, but persons who found that the system of education was good, sent their children to share in it, and paid very high premiums for the advantage. At this place I had been educated, from thence transferred to a German university, and from thence to a public office,—not one of your newspaper-reading and fire-poking places though, but a regular hard, daily grind, from ten till four, with my nose firmly fixed upon foolscap all the time, except during the few minutes devoted to the consumption of a "glass of old ale and a sandwich" at the neighbouring Alton ale-house.

Once, and once only since I "left," as schoolboys say, had I been up to these annual oratorical demonstrations, and then I obtained a day's leave of absence, and chartered a Hansom in conjunction with one of my best friends, a fellow who arrived at, and departed from, the school on the same day as myself, and who during the whole time had been my chosen companion. Dear old Theodore! He is now an engineer in the Company's service, and I receive long letters from him, dated Prome, and informing

me of the brilliant manner in which the Hukbadars, led by Beebee Bunnoo, a sepoy, carried the enemy's stockade. He cared little enough then, however, for anything but fun; and after the champagne, generously, but injudiciously, provided by our then host, but late pedagogue, resolutely refused to return home until the Bishop of London had favoured the company with a comic song.

Times, however, have much changed since then, and when I determined upon accepting the invitation, I recollected that a Hansom could no longer bear me to the scene of action; for a certain event, darkly hinted at in the description of "My New-Year's Eve," in a former chapter, has taken place, and I am a married man. A brougham from a neighbouring livery-stable was accordingly engaged, a day's leave of absence obtained, and, accompanied by her who holds the proud position of my wife, I set out.

Our way lay through that road leading to some apocryphal Court situate at Tottenham, and to my mind bearing a fearful and mysterious interest as being the residence of Mr. A. Davis; for, from my earliest years I have recollections of a weird-like placard bearing this solemn warning—"When you marry, go to A. Davis!" but giving no hint as to the reason for the proceeding. As a boy I had deter-

mined, if ever my fate should be hymeneal, to follow this proffered advice; but somehow, now that I had actually got through the ordeal and entered upon wedded life, in the multiplicity of business consequent upon the change of estate, I had forgotten the existence of this eminent philanthropist, and neglected to pay him a visit. May I not rue the consequences of my oblivion! Proceeding on through those towns to which Camden and Kentish have given their respective names (very likely they were well-known parties at one time, but the localities now are principally remembered, one by the "Red Cap" public-house (which is as famed in its neighbourhood as was the *bonnet rouge* in the time of Robespierre, and the other from having been the residence of the late Mr. Mathews), we begin to arrive at the outskirts of Lowebarre, and my ancient reminiscences revive strongly within me.

There, to the right of that white house (Hicks's the great brewer, whose son went to school with me, and used to rub his hands with lemon-juice to prevent the sting of the cane), used to be our cricket-field, and by its smooth and velvety appearance it must still be used for the same purpose. I could find my way blindfold to any part of that field now! Up to the highest branch of that oak in the centre I have climbed a hundred times; now,

my only feat of agility is to scale the "knifeboard" of the Wellington omnibus, which conveys me matutinally to the City; and that, mind you, is no contemptible feat for a middle-aged gentleman who weighs —— I'm ashamed to say what. There is a pond in the left-hand corner, where we used to sail the boats purchased from an old sailor, to whom we gave sixpence for every exciting story of his own personal adventures; (I have since had some doubts as to their authenticity, particularly when I recollect that for a bloody engagement, or a fight with a whale, he always charged a shilling, and that in the hot and thirsty weather these stories were his favourites); and there is the very barn behind which I was found smoking a penny cigar, and received the penalty of this atrocious crime. "He jests at scars who never felt a——" birching at a public school; and if I am not mistaken, I yet bear about me evidences of my preceptor's strength of arm. That tall red-brick house on the brow of the hill, opposite Bushcut the nurseryman's, was where I "boarded." There is the church in which, I am ashamed to say, I have enjoyed so many blissful dreams, and been so often ruthlessly awakened by a vicious poke in that peculiarly sensitive portion of anatomy known as the "small of the back," from the knuckles of the usher. That usher now lies mouldering in a West

Indian graveyard; and it is often a consolation to me to think that, dire enemies as we at one time were, we parted friends, and that, hard-hearted and morose as we deemed him, I saw his eyes filled with tears as he bade adieu to those with whom he had been so long connected. Is it still in existence, and does the same man keep it? Yes, there it stands, and as brightly as ever shines the name of Davis over the door. The "tuck-shop," the baker's next door to the playground, the place where at twelve o'clock dozens of hot ginger-cakes, queen-cakes, and buns were devoured by boys whose dinner-hour was one.

We'll leave the brougham here, my dear, and before entering the school I must speak to Davis himself. How he stares! He calls me "Master" still, and looks at my whiskers as though they were advertisements of the Balm of Peruvia, instead of being the modest strips of hair that they really are. He calls up his wife, and they both gaze so intently that we'll beat a retreat, and, passing under this gateway, with the Bienfaisant crest duly sculptured on the stone, we find ourselves in the playground. Wait a moment! We won't go in just yet. I want to look about me. There is the fives wall, against which I have leant and received cuts from the hardest of tennis-balls for errors committed at "egg-

hat" and "high cockolorum." It was down in that corner that Cribb Major gave me the black eye which prevented my appearance in public for the first fortnight of our Christmas holidays; and under this hat-peg in the outer lobby you can still see my initials carved, with a total disregard of the scholastic furniture. Now let us enter the school-room. Don't be frightened at this large assemblage, my dear; they are harmless, simple-minded people, and this annual speech day at the school furnishes them with excitement and conversation for a month afterwards. All the old set, I see, with some fresh faces. That man in the blue coat and white trousers, who is intently watching the movements of the spider swinging himself from the oaken beam across the ceiling, is the Duke of Claverhouse. He is not particularly eminent as a scholar, nor does he take much interest in the proceedings—generally, indeed, going to sleep, and dropping the book with which he has been accommodated at the most pathetic part of the oration; but it's a good thing to have a duke present, more especially if you can get a line of "amongst the company we noticed," into the "Morning Post." That red-faced old gentleman in the large chair is the head-governor and trustee of the funds left for the Bienfaisant Charity. He'll make a long speech at the end of the boys' orations,

about the advantages of education, the eyes of Europe (which he describes as firmly fixed on the Lowebarre School), and the virtues of the head-master. The tall man next him is also a governor, and the incumbent of the parish. During my time we used to call him "Soft Tommy,"—I wonder whether he still preserves the name? Do you see that knot of men, all of whom just now nodded to me, and then nudged each other in the ribs as we passed?—they are old schoolfellows of mine, now all University men, and the nudge meant to say, "Do you see his wife?" I'll introduce you to some of them presently, and they'll bow and grin and be very shy—for your University men are not very great in ladies' society. At that academy for dancing superintended by the philanthropic Mr. Laurent, they are perfectly at home, and unawed by the heaviest Guardsman or stiffest-collared Treasury clerk; but with ladies of a different description to those supporting this nursery of the Terpsichorean art they are reserved, and require a great deal of drawing out. That one to whom they are all listening so intently, the man in the stiff-starched, check muslin cravat, and rusty black waistcoat, is Cuthbert, by us irreverently known as "Bluchers," for his persevering attachment in youth to those elegant articles of dress. He is now a Fellow of his college,

and took a "double-first" (I suppose you know what that is, my dear, as your brother was an Oxford man), has written a book about Greek verse, and is generally esteemed; but I'll bet a sovereign he could not tell you who Tennyson is, and never heard of Longfellow or Edgar Poe. Who is that very tall man in the moustache bowing to us? You don't know? No more do—by Jove, it must be little Jenks, whom we used to hoist over the garden wall at night, and send into the town on stolen expeditions for "tuck," and whom I have thrashed to my heart's content many a time in winter, just to keep hands warm. I fervently trust that he has forgotten that part of our acquaintance, or that he's not of a revengeful disposition. Let's go up and talk to him. "How are you, Jenks? let me present you to my wife." Very polite and friendly he is, but why did he wince when I called him Jenks? I'm a bad hand at names, but I'm sure that was his! What is he whispering about? Eh! "D—— it old fellow, haven't you heard? Not Jenks now; godfather dead, left me his tin—come and have a turn in my yacht in September!" And with that he slides a card in my hand, and on it I see "Mr. Jenks Bransborough, Z 95 Albany," and at the end of the entertainment I see him drive away in a cab with a groom

behind, the lacquer of whose boots makes my plebeian eyes wink again.

The boys have arranged themselves at the lower end of the school, and that is a sign that the speeches are soon to begin; so let me be quick, and point out what more I have to show you.

Do you see that window over the large doors and looking down into the school-room? That is the window of the library—a room, my dear, on which, as my wife, you must learn to look with peculiar interest. How often have I gazed with trembling eyelids upon that window! how often has the headmaster looked down from that window upon me, placed as a mark of opprobrium in the centre of the room, and on catching sight of me said, "Are you there again, Sir? do me the favour to walk up here!" I have walked up, the blind has been drawn down, and a ceremony has ensued which, to use the words of the reporters, "can better be imagined than described."

"Shrieks thro' Berkeley's roof shall ring."

But we used to bite a piece of India rubber, and come down-stairs very much flushed in the face, and with a strong objection to sitting down. There's a man of scholastic appearance and rigid demeanour

marshalling the small boys into their seats; he is the writing-master, evidently, for you will always observe him to be the most magisterial in his deportment among the grandees of scholastic life! He is a new importation since my time (I'm forgetting how long that was ago), but his pomp reminds me greatly of my old teacher of caligraphy, "Dot," as we used to call him, for he was a Norfolk man and always impressed on us the necessity of "dotting our *oi's*"—"Dot" was a good fellow and an excellent arithmetician; but beyond this he knew little or nothing, and our great delight was to take him a severe passage in Æschylus or Sophocles, and ask him to translate it. How hot he grew! and with what a mixture of confusion and sternness did he desire us to "return to our seats and find it out ourselves!"

The buzzing of "silence" now proclaims that the orations are about to begin, and through the door at the end of the hall advance two youths with the shiniest of faces, the oiliest of heads, and the stiffest of shirt collars. I remember well the anxiety about our personal appearance and the attention to our "get-up" that we used to evince. The feeling that Eliza Higgins was there, the knowledge that she would hear the applause infallibly bestowed upon the close of my oration, used to make my cheek glow even more than the starch in my gills, and my feet

tingle even more than the tightness of my boots. You need not give my arm such a viciously jealous twinge, my dear; that stoutish middle-aged lady is Eliza Higgins that was, now Mrs. De Bretten; and the little boy in clothes that all button on to one another (technically termed, I believe, a "skeleton suit"), is her eldest hope. This first oration, you will perceive, is in Latin, and, therefore, particularly well understood by the audience, which consists principally of ladies. The second, on a reference to the list, is, I find, in Greek; but both these you will understand as well, if not better, than the third, which is jocularly announced to be in French, and bears not the slightest resemblance to the Parisian vernacular. I will leave you, my dear, to listen to these sucking Burkes and Sheridans, (women always admire what they cannot understand, so you'll be amused), while I take a turn through the village, and revive old reminiscences. Ah! the old-fashioned "Cage," at the door of which we used to stand on autumn evenings listening to the howls of drunken and refractory Irish reapers, is gone, and a new stuccoed building, called "Police Station," is in its place. The little low-roofed village inn—"The Fox under the Hill," where I furtively imbibed rum-shrub, and thought myself a *roué* for so doing, has also vanished; that fine gin-palace, all green glass and gilding,

cannot, I'm sure, be half so comfortable a place. There's the stationer's, with a smirk young man, all curl and wristbands, behind the counter! I recollect Miss Broadstares, with her lovely ringlets and bewitching smile, behind that same counter—the recollection arouses my rage, and I glare at the macassared young man until he retires in dismay! The butcher's, with the sheep going in as usual,—the hair-cutter's, clean, neat, and redolent of Circassian cream—nay, the whole village seems unchanged; no one recognises me, but all as of yore come to their shop doors to gaze at a stranger; and my appearance among them furnishes matter for surmise and gossip over the domestic tea-table and the nightly club-table.

On my return I find the speeches just over, and the company glad to escape to the refreshments provided in a large tent on the lawn of the head-master's garden. I'll introduce you to that same head-master. It's wonderful the influence he still retains over me! He is small of stature and mild of manner; I am nearly six feet high and boisterous withal; but were he to look severely at me my heart would sink into my boots, and I could no more call him by his surname without the prefix "Mr." than I dare slap the Duke of Claverhouse on the back, and beg him to shorten the speech with which he is now regaling the

visitors, and breaking the rules of the late lamented Lindley Murray.

After the duke's, many other speeches are made, and all to the same effect—a strong testimony to the diffusion of knowledge in general, and many compliments to the Lowebarre school, and its masters in particular; a great deal of champagne is consumed; and towards the end of the evening little boys, who have crept in surreptitiously, begin to get noisy and familiar. Let us drink one glass of wine before we go to the health and prosperity of the Bienfaisant Charity: we may well do so; for you, my dear, have had a day's recreation, while I have renewed many pleasant reminiscences in thus revisiting my old school!

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